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Extending Oneself: Humour As A Teaching Medium in Social Studies Education

University — Université
University of Alberta

Degree for which thesis was presented — Grade pour lequel cette thèse fut présentée
M. Ed

Year this degree conferred — Année d'obtention de ce grade
1983

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EXTENDING ONESELF:
HUMOUR AS A TEACHING MEDIUM IN SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION

by

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A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
OF MASTER OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

EDMONTON, ALBERTA
SPRING, 1983

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

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DEGREE FOR WHICH THESIS WAS PRESENTED: M.Ed.

YEAR THIS DEGREE GRANTED: 1983

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ABSTRACT

In light of recent reviews which suggest that social studies is a boring subject for many students, this thesis develops an argument that humour has an important place in social studies education, and that its place is more than simple boredom relief.

The thesis examines the interrelationship of humour and communication, arguing that humour can provide a lens through which to view the world. As well, humour can contribute to the formation of one's attitudes, and this has a crucial relationship with citizenship education.

The humorous attitude in a social studies classroom, then, may make an important contribution to the development of a student's philosophy of life and the clarification of a world view.

Humour may serve other functions, as well. Humour of words, ideas, situation, or of character all have implications for classroom instruction. As well, humour can be used as a social lubricant, a safety valve, therapy, as a tonic, or as a survival kit.

Because the social studies tend to approach the non-trivial questions or issues rooted in an abundance of fact, humour has a special relationship to social studies. Whether used to animate, provide a

change of pace, increase motivation and appeal, or to create a warm classroom environment, humour touches the student in a special way. The teacher's use of a humorous attitude just may make the social studies classroom a better place to be.

This thesis should be considered an "ideas work" which qualitatively addresses the issue of the humorous attitude in social studies.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am very much indebted to my advisor, Dr. Jim Parsons, who provided willing assistance and encouragement in the completion of this program. Jim always listens to the questions, and always has the answers! I wish to acknowledge, as well, the support of my examiners, Dr. John Oster and Dr. Don Massey, whose comments and suggestions were very useful in completing this project.

It with to express my thanks to the Board of Trustees, Sturgeon School Division No. 24, who granted me a partial leave of absence during the 1981-1982 school year to permit the completion of my course work. Such arrangements could only have been made with the support of Mr. Walter J. Heppler, Superintendent of Schools, and Mr. Norval Horner, Principal, Sturgeon Composite High School. Without this assistance, this degree could not have been obtained.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge the support of my family, especially Mom and Dad, whose combination of enthusiasm, encouragement, and expectation contributed to the completion of the program.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO HUMOUR IN SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION

INTEREST IN HUMOUR IN TEACHING

At the 1981 National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) Conference in Detroit, there was much discussion about current (but uncited) research that continues to indicate that social studies is perceived by students to be their least favourite school subject. In my few years as a teacher, I have heard many students growl about the ordeal they face in the social studies classroom. Indeed, our school counsellor believes that social studies is the least popular subject at school. During recent parent-teacher interviews, a parent asked how I can stand to teach such dry tripe as social studies. A former principal ridiculed my choice to accept a full social studies timetable ("You're sure you won't take a few English classes for your own enjoyment?"). In Detroit, I dozed off in the midst of a horrendous presentation on a fascinating topic--"New Approaches to Teaching History."

Others have criticized the social studies and social studies educators. A few years ago, A.B. Hodgetts chastised Canada's social studies teachers for emphasizing nice, neat Acts of Parliament and dates and facts. Social studies was teacher-centred; the student was the bench-bound listener in a classroom augmented only by chalkdust. (Hodgetts, 1968) In Alberta, the 1975 Downey Report commented on the teachers' emphasis on traditional methods and the failure of the inquiry process in many classrooms. All of this describes a social studies classroom which does not promote interest, involvement, or awareness. (Downey, 1975) However, some of my best teachers used humour in their classrooms. Their classes (and courses) were interesting and maybe even beneficial because I became an active participant in the learning process. I was happy to be in class and enjoyed the course work.

Humour exists in many forms which can be adapted to the classroom. Wordplay, incongruity, humour of situation and character are applications which serve as an extension of oneself in the classroom--an extension which increases classroom appeal. This attraction and interest in learning is an important goal for social studies education, and this thesis is a statement of the author's interest in such a goal.

THE NEED FOR QUALITATIVE HUMOUR RESEARCH

In studying the use of humour and its relationship or application to the classroom, one is struck by the minute collection of research. At the International Conference on Humour and Laughter convened in Cardiff, Wales, in July 1976, a vast number of papers were presented on such topics as ethnic humour, cross-cultural humour, humour as therapy, humour in individual differences, and approaches to the psychological study of humour. One small section was devoted to humour as a form of communication, and this topic included one paper relating humour to the classroom. Only an abstract was published in the collected papers, and the one paragraph summary was too short to be of very much assistance. (Linfield in Chapman and Foot, 1977, p. 328)

The central interest of researchers of humour has been its psychological implications. Questions such as "What is funny?" or "Why are different things funny to different people?" have been researched many times. However, the various functions of humour in the classroom have not drawn the attention of researchers.

Leacock observes that people who write books about humour have none. The joker is not as respected as the "solemn ass":

> ... people who sit down to write books on humor are scientific people, philosophical analysers who feel that they must make something serious, something real out of it, and show us that humor can, in the proper hands, be made as dull and as respectable as philology or epistemology. (Leacock, 1938, p. 7)

As Baughman realizes, "no sooner does education become formalized than it becomes solemnized." In these two solemnities humour has particular importance: education as an adjustment to life and education as the development of the mind. (Baughman, 1974, p. 62) The stake of humour in education involves both. A humorous attitude can create or contribute to the creation of a social environment conducive to learning. In such an environment, the student gains interest in the subject material and feels better about his studies. As well, the humorous attitude has implications for values education because it serves as an extension of man. Humour reaches out to touch individuals and may influence student outlook in a rapidly changing world. This thesis examines a role for humour in social studies education and calls upon teachers to extend themselves by incorporating humour into their program plans. By improving the social environment, the humorous attitude as a form of communication becomes a vital medium in social studies education.

TACKING JELLY TO THE WALL: DEFINING HUMOUR

Humour is an elusive word, but its origins may be traced to a Latin term meaning "wetness" (like "humid" and "humidity"). A liquid that was believed to be flowing somewhere in the body determined one's "humour." A physician's task could be viewed to keep man in "good humour."

Some authors consider humour and laughter to be the same. The scientific definitions of laughter are particularly amusing, including the definition provided in the fourth century by Saint Gregory of

Nyssa:

> If one is gladdened by a pleasant communication the ducts of the body will also be enlarged owing to the pleasure. Now in the case of pain the fine and invisible evaporations of the ducts are checked, and as the viscera within is bound in tighter position, the moist vapor is forced to the head and to the membrane of the brain. This vapor being accumulated in the hollows of the brain is then pressed out through the ducts lying beneath the eyes, where the contraction of the eyelashes segregates the moisture in the form of drops called tears. Likewise, on the other hand, it must be observed that if the ducts are enlarged beyond their accustomed size in consequence of the opposite affections, a quantity of air is drawn through them toward the depths, and is there again naturally expelled through the mouth, since the entire viscera, and especially it is said the liver, forcefully ejects this air by a convulsive and violent movement. Nature therefore provides for the passage of this air through an enlargement of the aperture of the mouth by means of the pushing apart of the cheeks enclosing the air. This condition is termed laughter. (Eastman, 1921, pp. 136-137)

Such a definition gives the liver added importance. Dearborn's definition of laughter, recorded at the turn of the century, also represents a high level of scientific proficiency:

> There occur in laughter and more or less in smiling, clonic spasms of the diaphragm in number ordinarily about eighteen perhaps, and contraction of most of the muscles of the face. The upper side of the mouth and its corners are drawn upward. The upper eyelid is elevated, as are also, to some extent, the brows, the skin over the glabella, and the upper lip, while the skin at the outer canthi of the eyes is characteristically puckered. The nostrils are moderately dilated and drawn upward, the tongue slightly extended, and the cheeks distended and drawn somewhat upward; in persons with the pinnal muscles largely

> developed, the pinnae tend to incline forwards. The lower jaw vibrates or is somewhat withdrawn (doubtless to afford all possible air to the distending lungs), and the head, in extreme laughter, is thrown backward; the trunk is straightened even to the beginning of bending backward, until (and this usually happens soon), fatigue-pain in the diaphragm and accessory abdominal muscles causes a marked proper flexion of the trunk for its relief. The whole arterial vascular system is dilated, with consequent blushing from the effect on the dermal capillaries of the face and neck, and at times of the scalp and hands. From this same cause in the main the eyes often slightly bulge forwards and the lachrymal gland becomes active, ordinarily to a degree only to cause a "brightening" of the eyes, but often to such an extent that the tears overflow entirely their proper channels. (G.V.N. Dearborn, "The Nature of the Smile and Laugh," Science, 11: 283, June 1, 1900, pp. 853-854, quoted in Moody, 1978, pp. 1-2)

More modern approaches distinguish between humour and laughter. Early theorists outline theories of laughter instead of humour. Laughter is certainly a body response, but it can be the result of factors which are not humorous. Humour itself has to do more with a stimulus or a condition. Consequently, descriptions of humour (instead of laughter) tend to avoid the quantitative dilemma shown above.

Baughman concludes that

> humor is that soothing and compensating piece of the mind which prevents us from being overcome by life's adversities. Humor can dissipate the fog and make life more enjoyable and far less threatening ... Humor is our sixth sense--as important as any of the other five. It creates happiness, fosters friendship, cheers the discouraged, and dissolves tensions. And, as a bonus, it frees the mind, oils the squeaks, and enables us to carry on with fewer

> dark hours. (Baughman, 1974, p. 52)

This freedom is a freedom to talk nonsense or to consider illogical thoughts: "Laughter occurs when the circuit is complete." (Bateson in Levine, 1969, p. 165) One author concludes that humour is like a diaper change: "It doesn't solve any problems permanently ... just makes life a bit more comfortable for a while." (Baughman, 1974, p. 61) The important aspect of this conception of humour is the development of a humorous attitude, as Baughman suggests:

> Much more should be said and written about humor for so many think it means no more than the ability to tell a funny story or to respond to one. Actually, a sense of humor refers to a complete philosophy of life. It includes the ability to take it as well as to hand it out: it includes poise, the capacity to bend without breaking, taking life's responsibilities seriously but oneself not too seriously. A man who can laugh at himself will always be amused. Other less obvious components of humor are these: the ability to relax, to escape from tension, to get pleasure out of the joys of others, to live unselfishly, laughing with people, not at them. (Baughman, 1974, p. 52)

Leacock traces the development of humour and laughter, and detects its rise first as "a short exultation or triumph" of the "cry of the savage over his fallen enemy." (Leacock, 1939, p. 12) Through time, humour has become more complex. The Elizabethan age represents some of the best literary humour, and Leacock fears that humour may be lessening in an increasingly inquisitive, technological environment.

The one constant consideration, however, is the universality of humour and laughter:

> But most of all, we laugh. This is a physiological trick carried down from our monkey days. Aristotle is scarcely correct when he says that man is the only laughing animal. There is good ground for saying that the primates all laugh--the word here being used to include not only archbishops and bishops, but orangoutangs, gorillas, and chimpanzees. (Leacock, 1938, p. 12)

The humorous attitude and the universality of humour and laughter are important considerations in defining humour. Quantitative measures are not adequate. In the classroom, one is not vitally interested in the degree of funniness or the specific arousal point in joke-telling. However, the role of humour in the inter-relationships of teacher, student, and curriculum is of particular fascination.

THE MULTIPLICITY OF HUMOUR THEORY

There is no attempt in this thesis to outline a new, improved theory of humour. There are already many theories of humour (as described in Chapter 2), and some of these theories develop unique perspectives or create new configurations of knowledge. Many of these theories have application to the educational process, but the password is the use of humour as a form of communication. Humour theory attempts to scientifically answer outstanding issues of a psychological nature, and the directions for future research outlined by Keith-Spiegel include research topics in need of quantification.

This thesis does not propose to answer quantitative questions about humour. Yet, quantification seems to be an important pastime for humour theorists. Adapting Keith-Spiegel's research, the following questions can be identified: (1) Given the incredible number of terms--some of which are used interchangably--what is humour, anyway? (2) Should humour research focus on the thinking process, motivational aspects, or the emotional qualities? (3) Is there one or more than one category of humour? (4) What is the relationship of laughter and humor? (5) What is the relationship of laughing and smiling? (6) Which comes first, the pleasure or the laughter? (7) Is laughter an expression of pleasure or of disguised displeasure? (8) What is the role of the release of nervous energy? (9) Is laughter and/or humor a human phenomenon or is it shared with higher animals? (10) Is humour and/or laughter inborn or acquired? (11) Is humour a universal or selective characteristic? (12) Is humour individually distinctive or similar for everyone? (13) Is humour representative of goodness or a demonstration of cruel nature? (14) How does humour relate to truth and falsehood? (15) Is one's humour sense driven consciously, unconsciously, or by environmental circumstances? (16) Is humour and/or laughter a sign of a healthy or unhealthy person? (17) Is humour the result of creative expression or a survival/defense process? (18) Is humour/laughter a reaction to a good mood or a cure for a bad mood? (19) Does humour involve mental work or is it a work-saving device? (20) How do intellect and emotion relate to humour/laughter? (21) Does humour serve individual or societal needs? (22) Is it possible to develop a theory of humour that covers these issues? (Keith-Spiegel, 1972, pp. 14-34) These questions may be important, but they will not directly serve as the centre of attention for this thesis.

The emphasis of research that attends to these twenty-two questions, however, focuses on quantitative instead of qualitative and philosophical theories of humour. It seems that today's humour researchers are more interested in supporting knowledge claims with statistics. Anthony Ludovici explains the generation of his own humour theory, which involves a different kind of measurement:

> The author has carried the theory about in his mind for many years, lecturing upon it and discussing it with all sorts and conditions of men. But it was only after wide reading, mature reflection, and the careful consideration of much bitter criticism received from audiences at lectures, scholars, psychologists, offended humorists and, above all, women, that he decided to record it in book form ... (Ludovici, 1932, p. 6)

With so many unanswered questions in humour research and so many incomplete attempts to answer the psychological and philosophical questions, one can understand why there is no singular theory of humour. Like Ludovici, theorists battle out positions, ideas, and conclusions and frequently pose new questions while addressing the old.

HUMOUR AND TEACHING: IDENTIFYING THE QUESTIONS

This thesis deals with humour in social studies education. It is the author's belief that humour has an important place in social studies. A central question posed for this study is this: What argument can be constructed for the use of humour as a teaching medium in social studies education?

There are other questions as well. How does humour interrelate with communication? Humour provides a lens through which to view the world around us and can be important in attitude formation and citizenship education. Can a case be made in support of a humorous attitude in social studies? Maybe the social studies teacher has important things to say to the student which contribute to the development of a philosophy of life and the clarification of a world view. What are the functions of humour in social studies education? If humour creates a better social environment for learning, there must be types of humour which can be applied to the classroom. Finally, why is humour important to the social studies? Social studies content and objectives should be able to clarify the importance of humour.

Extending the work of Stephen Leacock, Marshall McLuhan, and a host of humour theorists, this thesis acts as a response to the kinds of criticisms of social studies posed at the outset of this chapter.

ORGANIZATION OF THESIS

Following this introduction to the thesis, an examination is made of the approaches to and theories of humour in Chapter 2. Theories of humour are used to explain the communications process of humour and its relationship to education. An argument is presented relating humour as a form of communication. Chapter 3 focuses on the work of Marshall McLuhan, and the idea of a "medium" is applied to humour. The chapter puts forward the notion of the humorous attitude--a kind of philosophy of teaching (and of life) that has significance for social studies instruction. The types and functions of humour are examined in Chapter 4. Humour is seen as a way of gaining attention and energizing education. The chapter studies not only the types of humour, but in what circumstances humour can be used. The importance of humour to social studies education is an important component of Chapter 5. The nature of the social studies classroom is explained to help clarify why humour has a place in the social studies. The thesis concludes that there is a vital need for the development of a humorous attitude in social studies education to help students meet the challenges of a changing world.

DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study is intended to be a qualitative examination of humour in social studies education. Although some of the questions raised may be psychological, the overall direction is philosophical and the end product is considered to be an "ideas work." Classification and analysis or questionnaire work is just out of place. This study involves no test tubes or Bunsen burners: "You cannot weigh an argument in a balance, measure social forces with a slide rule, and resolve humor with a spectroscope." (Leacock, 1938, p. 8) Humour is a quality which is felt, not a quantity which is measured.

A second area of interest which has been excluded from this study is sarcasm (humour not always based on human kindness). Leacock notes that sarcasm involves the "infliction of pain as a perverted source of pleasure ... Here belongs 'scarcasm'--that scrapes the human feeling with a hoe ... " (Leacock, 1938, pp. 20-21) This thesis is directed at the positive uses of humour, and sarcasm and cynicism have been excluded from the study. There are many dangers, in terms of education transactions, from the use of sarcasm in the social studies classroom. An interest of this research endeavour is the development of an improved social environment. The use of sarcasm can be an obstacle in attaining this goal.

ASSUMPTIONS OF THE STUDY

An important assumption of this study is that humour is good. Certainly, there is a consensus of opinion that a greater number of optimists and good-natured people are men of humour. (Keith-Spiegel, 1972, p. 24) Yet, some authors (like Ludovici) point out that humour has exceptionally decadent qualities:

> Guided by their newspapers and their modern books, the average man and woman (particularly the latter) without any idea or thought of what laughter really is, cling tenaciously to the view that humour is good and desirable, and, what is more, unquestioningly assume the right of making the most damaging remarks about people who lack it, and the most laudatory about people who possess it. In fact, during the Great War, when journalists had exhausted the last dregs of invective against the German Kaiser, and cast about them for some final and annihilating insult that would express the ultimatum of their own and their readers' loathing and contempt for him, you will remember that they could think of nothing worse than to accuse him of having no sense of humour. And the Anglo-Saxon world rejoiced, because it imagined that this finished him much more effectively than did the revolution in his own country.
>
> The fact that this view of humour, like most popular views on other subjects, is the outcome of the modern standardisation of opinion, and that the majority of people adopt it without knowing how or why does not prevent the average man and woman (particularly the latter) from displaying every sign of resent-

> ment and anger if, to their faces, you question its validity. And from the bitterness and fervour with which they defend humour when its extreme desirability is questioned, you might almost be led to believe that each individual in modern society had independently and by his or her original effort arrived at the conclusion that humour is a good thing. It is one of the marvels of modern standardisation that those persons seem to be the least aware of it who are its most humble victims. (Ludovici, 1932, pp. 7-8)

This study portrays the positive impact of humour. The educator's mission is to teach the individual, and this is accomplished in a responsible way. Humour, in aiding this process, is used positively. There is no standardization of thought about humour in this sense. The only standardization seems to be that humorists are not serious about their work. Ludovici's argument appears unfounded.

There are some theorists (e.g., Plato, Hobbes) that see humour as a negative or evil force. In society at large, this may be true, but in the classroom situation, the teacher is charged with a responsibility that must be undertaken. The notion that humour is good is a key assumption of this work.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

One educator suggested that if I planned to write a book about humour in teaching, I should lend my "expertise" to teach other teachers how to be funny. Such a statement misses the point of the research.

Humour in the classroom does not mean the presence of the teacher, who as stand-up comedian, provides entertainment to the adolescent crowd on a daily basis. It means the development of a teaching environment which permits good humour in the interrelationship of teacher, student, and program. However, the imaginative Stephen Leacock actually proposes a college degree program in humour, based on some interesting courses:

> COURSE No. I--Elements of Humour. Open to first-year men and fourth-year women.
>
> COURSE No. II--The Technique of Humour. Four hours a week for four years, leading to the degree of D.F.
>
> COURSE No. III--Practical: How to tell a Funny Story. Men only. This course leads to a Government diploma, or licence, to tell funny stories in Pullman cars.
>
> COURSE No. IV--Post-Graduate: Tears and Laughter. The highest phase of humour where it passes from the Ridiculous to the Sublime. This course is open only to the older members of the faculty and to first-year women. For in this matter women start where men end.
>
> If this book turns out, as it probably will, to be one of those epoch-making volumes which create a revolution in human thought, it will be followed by the establishment of regular college departments in humour, leading to such degrees as those indicated above. There will be correspondence courses with circulars and printed testimonials after the following models:
>
> GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT
> TO THE
> EUREKA SCHOOL OF FUN
>
> Gentlemen:
>
> I desire to express my appreciation of the effect that your Course Number 6 (Six Weeks' Course in Applied Humour) has had upon my mother-in-law. Before taking the course her disposition was of a melancholy if not morose character. Now she keeps us in fits at meal

> times. Please give her another six weeks.
>
> P.S.--What would it cost to send her abroad for a two-year post-graduate course?
>
> BROKER BREAKS SILENCE: TESTIMONIAL
> TO THE BOISTEROUS BUSINESS COLLEGE
>
> Gentlemen:
>
> I want to thank you for the excellent results obtained from your correspondence course on Humour as a Business Stimulant. I am a stock broker and up till now have been constantly depressed whenever I was cleaned out by a heavy fall of the market. Taking your course has altered everything. The more it falls, the more I laugh. To-day there was a twenty-point drop in International Hydrogen and I simply sat and roared. This may have been partly because I was selling it. But your course helped me to see the fun of the thing. (Leacock, 1935, pp. 5-7)

I, like Leacock, do not expect to see Humour Departments spring up across university faculties; yet, there is an important message in Leacock's fantasy. The end product of the courses he describes is always "to see the fun of the thing." The humorous attitude includes this idea; indeed, it develops it.

The crucial implication of this thesis is that we, as individuals, can and should place more interest in humour as a medium. It is what makes things fun: "Human societies treasure laughter and whatever can produce it. Without laughter everyday living becomes drab and lifeless; life would seem hardly human at all." (Gruner, 1978, p. 1) Maybe the strongest implication is presented by Soviet diplomat Boryev: "In the world of laughter and in the laughter of the world lies one of the hopes for peace on earth ... The world will never perish so long as it can laugh!" (Boryev, 1976, p. 24) By giving some life to humour, one is able to bring some humour to life. This may be considered to be an attractive choice of futures.

CHAPTER II

APPROACHES TO AND THEORIES OF HUMOUR AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO EDUCATIONAL COMMUNICATION

In the Appendix of J.Y.T. Grieg's The Psychology of Laughter and Comedy, over one hundred different approaches to humour are outlined. Each writer has a new "theory" of humour which is a bit different (and, therefore, a bit better) than the most recently proposed theory. (Grieg, 1923, pp. 225-279) The term, "theory", is used to distinguish the ideas presented by these writers; yet, sometimes these "theories" would be more accurately referred to as "descriptions" or "explanations" of humour. Indeed, many of these statements include components or make assumptions for which any empirical measurement is impossible. For the purposes of this study, the terms, "theory", "description", and "explanation" will be used interchangably to represent the ideas of a writer or writers. It would be difficult to assess the separate, independent theories of one hundred individuals, so these ideas have been grouped into classifications for the convenience of the reader (and writer). Ten distinctive theories of humour can be classified into four separate groups: (1) physiological, (2) emotional-comparative, (3) divergent, and (4) intellectual categories of humour. The broader streams of thought will be referred to as "approaches", expressing generalizations of humour theory.

Physiological approaches to humour emphasize some evolutionary body function which is perceived as a natural, instinctive part of good humour and laughter. Theorists representing this approach develop the notion that laughter is evolutionary or that it serves the purpose of returning the body to a normal state. These theories are biological, instinctive, and evolutionary in nature. Emotional-comparative generalizations of humour involve the comparison of feelings as a factor in humour, especially statements of ambivalence or superiority. Humour is found, it is believed, in the relationship of pleasure versus pain or superiority versus inferiority. Divergent approaches stress differences or distinguishing features in perception, including incongruity and surprise factors. There is a marked difference between what is expected and what is delivered. Intellectual approaches to humour involve mind-play in piecing together components of humour's jigsaw puzzle. Configurational and psychoanalytic theories fall into this approach to humour, which centres on intelligence.

PHYSIOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO HUMOUR

BIOLOGICAL THEORIES

Biological theories of humour propose that laughter serves some function to the human body: it is a part of the central make-up of our life as human beings. As early as 1860, physiology was used to explain smiles and chuckles as a function of the body--something that appears before cognition. (Spencer, 1860, p. 402) Theorists also describe the positive effects of laughter, which "hasten the circulation and respiration and raise the blood pressure; and so bring about a condition of euphoria or general well-being which gives a pleasurable tone to consciousness." (McDougall, 1922, pp. 298-300) The mostmedical of the descriptions notes that

> ... hearty laughter stimulates practically all the large organs, and by making them do their work better through the increase of circulation that follows the vibratory massage which accompanies it, heightens resistive vitality against disease. Besides, the mental effect brushes away the dreads and fears which constitute the basis of so many diseases or complaints and lifts men out of the slough of despond into which they are so likely to fall when they take themselves overseriously. (Walsh, 1928, pp. 147-148)

Humour and laughter are, according to this explanation, just like the heart or lungs--a kind of biological equipment. Laughter serves the role of being a mental kidney in heightening one's vitality.

Biological theorists make their judgments from a biological perspective and do not discuss environmental alternatives. For these thinkers, humour and laughter are completely natural components of the genetic building blocks of human life.

INSTINCTIVE THEORIES

Laughter can also be considered to be an instinct because "it appears so early and so spontaneously.

We never have to teach children when to laugh; we have to teach them when not to laugh." (Eastman, 1921, p. 227) Eastman reasons that laughter's early appearance (before intellectual functions) signifies hereditary behaviour. Further, he notes that "humorous laughter is infectious" and this assigns it to instinctive behaviour on the basis of the reaction of others (Eastman, 1921, p. 230) McComas, too, views laughter as an instinctive act. He concludes that even in its simplest form, laughter is "an expression of a pleasurable state of being /which/ ... may be aroused by no appeal to the intellect whatever." (McComas, 1923, p. 47) With maturity, control and direction emerge, as well as intellectual aspects of humour. In actuality, instinct theorists write off humour as an inexplicable part of nature. They have no real explanation, so laughter must exist courtesy of Mother Nature. These theorists, as well, tend to note the presence of sympathy and suggestion in turning on instinctive behaviour. As McComas concludes, other theories may explain why men sometimes laugh but "they are useless in explaining the hilarity of a boy with a new toy." (McComas, 1923, p. 46) In such a case, there is no intellectual wordplay; no disparaging situations; no feeling of superiority: "We speak of the sense of humor as a distinct hereditary emotional endowment, and that is what an instinct is." (Eastman, 1921, p. 236) Humour and laughter, then, may be considered to be an integral part of the human--a genetic birthright.

EVOLUTIONARY THEORIES

A third example based on physiological approaches to humour is evolutionary theory. This perspective puts forward the notion that humour is simply a part of an evolutionary development that may be traced to before the cave man. Ludovici suggests that "even the sounds accompanying laughter, that cachinnation which is always distinctly gutteral may be merely a specific variation of the hiss of the cat and its remote ancestor the reptile, at the time of the display of the fangs." (Ludovici, 1932, p. 73) If one accepts such a possibility, then one could argue that laughter has developed, over a period of time, through the animal kingdom. Man has progressed, in some form, from hissing and showing the teeth to a more intellectual form of humour. Some theorists believe that laughter served as a communications device in prelingual times--as "a vocal signal to other members of the group that they may relax with safety." (Hayworth, 1928, p. 384) Hayworth concludes that "laughter originated long before language developed as a byproduct of heavy breathing of struggle or the suspended breathing of tension." (Hayworth, 1928, p. 384) McComas agrees by observing that "any attempt to explain its origin and development must recognize it /humour/ as an indispensable adjunct to the human race at some time in its evolution." (McComas, 1923, p. 52) Humanization has gradually occurred, if this theory is to be followed, on an evolutionary basis (See Darwin, 1872, pp. 196-219). Humour and laughter today represent the evolutionary product of biting, physically attacking and snarling. The humanization of these qualities is seen as the essence of humour.

RELEASE/RELIEF THEORIES

Body function is also a key part of the release or relief theory of humour. Theorists believe that a function of humour is to provide relief from strain or stress by releasing excess tension as laughter. Spencer's belief is that excess nervous energy is created by tensions or constraints, and one's energy level is increased. The release of this energy comes in the form of laughter. (Spencer, 1860, pp. 401-402) These theorists share some of their ideas with the biological theorists, who suggest that laughter is a natural, hereditary function that returns the body to homeostasis. The release/relief theorists tend to believe that the cause of the tension may include intellectual activity; indeed, Kline puts forward the idea that tension accompanies thought and results in a wave of emotion--a humorous explosion to relieve the strain. This conception of humour and laughter Kline calls a "freedom theory" and a "mental process":

> The failure to see that the sense of freedom is a constituent part of the sense of humor is doubtless responsible for the "superiority" and "degradation" theories. The sense of power is wrapt up with obligations, practical interests and relationships, the humor stimulus does not make us aware of power. Incongruity, descending or otherwise, all disorders of time and space relations in our actions, customs and language, all mechanized living movements, all deliberate manipulation of the humor stimuli are only humorous when they excite the sense of freedom ... It would then appear that the multiplicity of humor theories may be resolved into the freedom theory. The theories hitherto advanced have been more a classification of humorous stimuli than explanations of humor as a mental process. (Kline, 1907, p. 437)

Kline brushes aside other theories because they do not study the nature of humour and its relationship to the biological function of the body. Most other theories, in his mind, deal only with the humour stimuli, and this neglects the physiological aspects of humour and laughter. Kline's theory does not explain, however, why different persons would react differently to the same humour stimulus. Gregory's perspectives on relief are more liberal because he does not consider release or relief as the whole of laughter, and he recognizes that other theories may incorporate release into a more general theory of humour:

> Relief ... is written on the physical act of laughing and or the physiological accompaniments. It is written on the occasions of laughter and, more or less plainly, on each of its varieties. A laughter of sheer relief may be the original source of all other laughters, which have spread from it like a sheaf.

> Humanization and social discipline are connected with laughter through its relief: relief permits sympathy to enter by ending aggression and favours a restricted animus because withholding a blow can suggest contempt. The element of relief simultaneously gives value to laughter and involves a risk of degeneracy. Relief is not the whole of laughter, though it is its root and fundamental plan. The discovery of sudden interruption through relaxation of effort merely begins the inquiry into laughter. But it does begin it, and no discussion of laughter that ignores relief or makes it of little account can hope to prosper. (Gregory, 1924, p. 40)

Albert Rapp believes that laughter is the releasing of energy mobilized for attack. While the defeated person weeps, the victor laughs, draining off the excess energy. (Rapp, 1947) Other theorists have recognized release or relief as a part of humour and laughter. (Bergson, 1911; Sidis, 1913) Humorous laughter is "unstringing your bow" in such a way as to "throw off the poisons which might accumulate in our bodies and minds." (Rapp, 1951, p. 173) But taken alone, the relief theory of humour is incomplete for it fails to deal with the humour stimulus. To say that laughter is a release may be acceptable, but from what is this release? Other approaches to humour have attempted to deal with this question.

Physiological approaches to humour, then, emphasize body function or nature in explaining humour and laughter. It may be difficult to disagree with any of these proposals; however, all four theories seem to be incomplete. The physiological perspective in some ways is not an explanation of humour or laughter. It is a statement of the mechanical results: the laugh that vibrates the major organs of the body, the smile that instinctively appears, the sounds of snarls and glaring of bicuspids refined by a lineage of evolutionary ancestors, the waving display of excess nervous energy. These explanations pervade other theories of humour, which concentrate more on humour's environmental factors.

EMOTIONAL-COMPARATIVE APPROACHES TO HUMOUR

SUPERIORITY THEORIES

Superiority theories of humour move away from hereditary or release-type conceptions of humour and deal more directly with environmental aspects of humour. Keith-Spiegel's definition is best: "The roots of laughter in triumph over other people (or circumstances) supplies the basis for superiority theories. Elation is engendered when we compare ourselves favorably to others as being less stupid, less ugly, less unfortunate, or less weak. According to the principle of superiority, mockery, ridicule and laughter at the foolish actions of others are central to the humor experience." (Keith-Spiegel, 1972, p. 6) Such conceptions of humour can be traced back to Plato.

Plato proposed that malice, misfortune, and envy are the basis of enjoyment. As well, he encouraged laughing at conceit of wealth, beauty and intelligence:

> Socrates. ... In respect of wealth; he may think himself richer than his property makes him.
> Protarchus. Plenty of people are affected that way, certainly.
> Socrates. But there are even more who think themselves taller and more handsome and physically finer in general than they really and truly are.
> Protarchus. Quite so.
> Socrates. But far the greatest number are mistaken as regards the third class of things, namely possessions of the soul; they think themselves superior in virtue, when they are not.
> Protarchus. Yes indeed.
> Socrates. And is it not the virtue of wisdom that the mass of men insist on claiming, interminably disputing, and lying about how wise they are? (Plato, Philebus 48E-49A; Dialogue)

Plato's age is one in which laughter is reserved in nature. Laughter at the misfortunes of friends is a part of Plato's discussion of humour, but he is careful to note that excessive laughter is unacceptable:

> Neither ought our guardians to be given to laughter; for a fit of laughter which has been indulged to excess almost always produces a violent reaction ... Then personages of worth, even if only mortal men, must not be represented as overcome by laughter, and still less must such a representation of the gods be allowed.
> (Plato, Republic 3, p. 388)

Note the passionlessness with which Plato refers to the humorous. He believes that laughter has its place in society, but directed toward entertainers who expose the unexposed interests of others:

> It is necessary also to consider and know uncomely persons and thoughts, and those which are intended to produce laughter in comedy, and have a comic character in respect of style, song and dance, and of the imitations which these afford; for serious things can not be understood without laughable opposites, if he is to have any degree of virtue. And for this very reason he should learn them both in order that he may not in ignorance do or say anything which is ridiculous and out of place. He should command slaves and hire strangers to imitate such things but he should never take any serious interest in them himself, nor should any freeman or freewoman be discovered taking pains to learn them. And there should always be some element of novelty in the imitation. Let these, then, be laid down, both in law and in our discourse, as the regulations of laughable amusements which are generally called comedy. (Plato, Laws 7, 816-817)

This cross-section of Plato's work reveals an important conception of humour. Even to this day, the humorist may be shunned because his aims are not always serious. Indeed, some society members (especially the State's guardians) are not to be given to laughter. (Plato, Republic II, 388) As well, Plato's beliefs demonstrate the importance of an emotional or comparative superiority--being better than one's friend or more truthful. The adversary becomes comic because of this relationship, and is the object of laughter.

Aristotle's perspectives on humour are very similar to Plato's. He believes that the ludicrous is found in human defects which are not painful:

> Comedy is as we said it was, an imitation of persons who are inferior; not, however, going all the way to full villainy, but imitating

> the ugly, of which the ludicrous is one part. The ludicrous, that is, is a failing or a piece of ugliness which causes no pain or destruction: thus, to go no farther, the comic mask is something ugly and distorted but painless. (Aristotle, Poetics, V)

Aristotle, however, did not believe in satirizing individuals, which was painful and distorting: "We feel shame with respect to those whose chief occupation is the failings of their fellow men: satirists, for example, and comic poets--for these are, in effect, evil-speakers and tale-bearers." (Aristotle, Rhetoric, 2.6) It is interesting to note that the term "ugliness" could be used to describe other applications of humour, as well. "Ugliness" is something that can be moral, emotional, or intellectual, and Aristotlean theory is clearly useful in distilling other theories of humour.

Cicero picks up from Aristotle in saying that " ... the field or province ... of the laughable ... is restricted to that which may be described as unseemly or ugly; for the chief, if not the only, objects of laughter are those sayings which remark upon and point out something unseemly in no unseemly manner." (Cicero, De Oratore II, p. 236) Cicero defines two types of wit: wit of matter and wit of form. Wit of matter is humour based on facts and presented in the form of an anecdote or a caricature. Wit of form, however, is based on words and should be used sparingly. This shows Cicero's perception of humour as jokes on somebody by understatement, irony, farcical jests, hinted ridicule, comparison, etc. (Cicero, De Oratore II, pp. 235-290) Cicero's conception of humour, then, involves ridicule on the basis of character defects, especially perceived differences from expectation. Cicero clearly sees limits to the use of humour. He fears that the wrong people could be ridiculed:

> For neither outstanding wickedness, such as involves crime, nor, on the other hand, outstanding wretchedness is assailed by ridicule, for the public would have the villainous hurt by a weapon rather more formidable than ridicule; while they dislike mockery of the wretched, except perhaps if these bear themselves arrogantly. And you must be especially tender of popular esteem so that you do not inconsiderately speak ill of the well-beloved. (Cicero, De Oratore II, p. 237)

Laughter is stimulated, then, by a deception in expectation, by satire, or by comparing something with something worse. Superiority is victorious.

The superiority theory of Thomas Hobbes, which dates back to 1650, is one of the most significant explanations of humour. Hobbes discusses his perceptions of humour in this frequently cited excerpt:

> I may therefore conclude that the passion of laughter is nothing else but sudden glory arising from some sudden conception of some eminency in ourselves, by comparison with the infirmity of others, or with our own formerly: for men laugh at the follies of themselves past, when they come suddenly to remembrance, except they bring with them any present dishonour. It is no wonder therefore that men take heinously to be laughed at or derided, that is triumphed over. Laughter without

> offence must be at absurdities and infirmities abstracted from persons, and where all the company may laugh together: for laughing to one's self putteth all the rest into jealousy and examination of themselves. Besides, it is in vain glory, and an argument of little worth, to think the infirmity of another sufficient matter for his triumph. (Hobbes, Human Nature, Volume IV, Chapter IX, paragraph 13; Emphasis Hobbes)

Hobbes develops the idea of superiority over others by comparing an opponent's attributes with the goodness inherent in oneself. Indeed, this feeling of superiority can be generated by one's own actions:

> Sudden Glory, is the passion which maketh those Grimaces called LAUGHTER; and is caused either by some sudden act of their own, that pleaseth them; or by the apprehension of some deformed thing in another, by comparison whereof they suddenly applaud themselves. And it is incident most to them, that are conscious of the fewest abilities in themselves in their own favour, by observing the imperfections of other men. And therefore much Laughter at the defects of others, is a signe of Pusillanimity. For the great minds, one of the proper workes is, to help and free others from scorn; and compare themselves onely /sic/ with the most able. (Hobbes, Leviathan, Part I, Chapter 6; Emphasis Hobbes)

Hobbes's emphasis on "sudden glory" is important because he considers the process as a triumph of the mind. Hobbes believes that there are many defects in mankind which can be built upon to demonstrate one's superiority over other individuals and circumstances. Hobbes's views, however, do not enjoy universal acclaim.

Eastman, in his The Sense of Humor, calls

Hobbes's theory a simplistic opinion which could not be more inaccurate:

> This is the most famous opinion about laughter ever expressed, and perhaps the most purely and perfectly incorrect. Hobbes so explicitly identified humorous enjoyment with egotism and scorn, and drew therefrom so wry and erroneous a moral, that we might almost dismiss his remarks as a treatise upon sneers, if it were not for the word sudden which is advanced strongly, and intimates that even this bitter taste of joy must come in against our expectation if it is to have the quality of a jest. Hobbes did not develop this intimation, however, nor himself perceive its significance, and the fame of his theory rests upon its lucid simpleness, rather than upon any broad kinship with the truth. It rests upon the poetic felicity of the name, "sudden glory." (Eastman, 1921, pp. 139-140)

In Eastman's judgment, Hobbes is too concerned with ego and scorn. Just the same, the superiority theories of humour place a major priority on the environmental factors and, in this case, the suddenness of the internal glorification. Other authors are supportive of Hobbes's theory. Ludovici, for example, believes that Hobbes's theory covers all possibilities by explaining man's laughter without direct stimulus:

> ... I do maintain, in opposition to most Anglo-Saxon critics and thinkers that we have an exhaustive definition, because ... in Hobbes's explanation, not only is the old field of the ancients retained, but it is greatly extended to include both the series of laughs which are subjective, all the laughs which are objective, and in addition, a satisfactory reason why laughter can offend, and why some people laugh excessively ... Laughter is self-glory. So we can now understand why a person can laugh apparently

> at nothing, that is to say, unprovoked by any external stimulus, or the memory of any external stimulus. We can now understand all those laughs in which there is definite outside provocation; for ... those externally provoked laughs ... are ... implicit in his /Hobbes's/ two words, "self-glory." (Ludovici, 1932, pp. 49-50)

More recently, Gruner states that Hobbes's explanation of superiority is best. It is the "suddenness" and the "glory" that makes up Gruner's notion of laughter emitting elements:

> What is necessary and sufficient to cause laughter is a combination of a loser, a victim of derision or ridicule, with suddenness of loss. The victim must be embarrassed, discomfited, injured, demeaned, or exposed, and our perception of his embarrassment, discomfiture, injury, demeaning, or exposure, must occur in a brief instant. (Gruner, 1978, p. 31)

Thus, superiority over the victim is declared quickly. Degradation is also key to understanding superiority. Alexander Bain's interpretation of the ludicrous is as an occasion of "degradation of some person or interest possessing dignity, in circumstances that excite no other strong emotion." (Bain, 1899, p. 257) Bain actually extends Hobbes's thinking to include other things for ridicule: " ... laughter can be excited against classes, parties, systems, opinions, institutions, and even inanimate things that by personification have contracted associations of dignity ... " (Bain, 1899, p. 259) By extending Hobbes's theory, Bain sees superiority as a wider concept than dealing only with persons and individual differences. Bain's notion permits "sudden glory" by demonstrating superiority over such things as mechanical devices, jigsaw puzzles, or build-it-yourself projects. Such a definition explains the good feeling inside when one completes such a project.

Henri Bergson's theory of humour is an important conception of superiority. Bergson believes that "in laughter we always find an unavowed intention to humiliate, and consequently to correct our neighbour, if not in his will, at least in his deed." (Bergson, 1911, p. 136) Laughter, then, forces people to conform to the conventions of society. Laughter's function is to provide a disciplinary social lashing which discourages any kind of eccentric behaviour. One's bad ways are corrected by means of humiliation, and laughter becomes a social gesture that creates a superior atmosphere in which one recognizes a more appropriate line of conduct. Raymond Moody suggests that, as far as Bergson is concerned, comedy serves a socially therapeutic function:

> ... the very existence of a social order depends upon its members maintaining, through their attitudes and behavior, a vital, flexible attitude toward life. Bergson thought that ultimately what makes us laugh are situations in which someone has become inflexible to the point of losing his social elasticity. (Moody, 1978, p. 103)

At that point, society and other individuals become superior and the solemn individual endures social laughter.

A writer whose conceptions of humour are more closely related to Hobbes's work is Ludovici, who interprets humour as a kind of "superior adaptation" in which the individual feels better in a given situation than others. Ludovici's idea of superiority is that some people are able to adapt to situations better than others. In the case of simple joke telling, the individual who delivers the punch line has adapted better to the situation than the person who is trying to answer. The individual who "laughs last" has demonstrated superior adaptation. Ludovici also notes that one's amusement changes significantly dependent upon the dignity of the victim. The greater the dignity of the victim, the greater the resulting amusement. (Ludovici, 1932, pp. 62-73) Ludovici is critical of other theorists who fail, in his opinion, to explain how humour fills the described social function. Bain's theory is viewed as weak because it does not explain expression itself and Bergson's ideas do not outline how laughter develops "an element of scorn and contempt ... " (Ludovici, 1932, p. 39) Ludovici's argument is that, to explain humour as a result of superiority, it is important to determine how this superiority comes about. In his judgment, the process of adapting successfully or unsuccessfully to circumstances and individual situations is superior adaptation.

Boris Sidis's theory of humour takes a number of previously posed conceptions and works them into one large presentation. Sidis suggests that

> we laugh in a state of enjoyment when the difficult is accomplished with ease, and we laugh again when the easy is accomplished with difficulty. Shall we say that the one is the ascending laughter, the laughter of triumph, and the other the reverse, the descending laughter, the laughter over the defeated? (Sidis, 1913, p. 23; Emphasis Sidis)

The source of laughter, Sidis notes, is the "superabundant, spontaneous overflow of unused energies /which/ gives rise to joy and its accompaniment, laughter." (Sidis, 1913, p. 80) A combination of emotional-comparative and physiological approaches to humour, Sidis's ideas involve superiority in one form or another.

Articles by Albert Rapp develop the superiority theory of humour, as well. Rapp believes that wit, humour, and laughter can be traced from a physical duel to a contest of wits--a duel of mental skill. The laughter of victory, then, is "the relaxation of the superior person." (Rapp, 1949, pp. 85-91) Laughter can be a powerful weapon. Rapp comments that a person can be humiliated by the power of laughter and, given the contagious nature of laughter, the humiliation can be extensive. (Rapp, 1947, p. 217) Through this humiliation, the superior individual enjoys the laughter of victory.

Martin Grotjahn also outlines the importance of superiority in humour theory. He believes that, by depriving one of authority and dignity, it is possible to give an onlooker a feeling of superiority. One way to deprive an individual of dignity is to overemphasize a feature, a mannerism, or to develop a caricature. (Grotjahn, 1957, p. 17) In such a way, superiority is assured.

Canada's own Stephen Leacock observes superiority as a part of humour theory:

> Humor meant exultation, the sense of personal triumph over one's adversary, or the sense of delight in seeing something--anything--demolished or knocked out of shape. In such a form it was older than written language itself, belonging in the age of grunts and barks out of which language arose. It expressed itself in action, not words. (Leacock, 1938, p. 15)

Leacock uses examples to demonstrate this feeling of superiority; "exultation" occurs when the teacher sits on a tack, when a cigar blows up in an individual's face, or when an umbrella breaks on its way up or down. The subject or maybe the onlooker becomes superior, and laughter is the result.

Superiority theories are frequently used to explain the nature of wit, humour, or laughter. Whether one agrees with Plato or one of his successors, this notion is a focal point for humorists. There is no doubt that superiority has a major role to play in explaining many forms of humour. However, assorted theorists believe that other explanations are more credible.

AMBIVALENCE THEORIES

Ambivalence theories of humour involve both emotion and comparison. These conceptions of humour hold that "laughter results when the individual simultaneously experiences incompatible emotions or feelings." (Keith-Spiegel, 1972, p. 10)

Plato expresses the belief that laughter comes from the simultaneity of pain and pleasure. In Philebus he charts his argument of this fundamental duality:

> Socrates. And did we not say that it is malice that makes us feel pleasure in our friend's misfortunes?
> Protarchus. It must be.
> Socrates. The upshot of our argument then is that when we laugh at what is ridiculous in our friends, we are mixing pleasure this time with malice, mixing, that is, our pleasure with pain; for we have been for some time agreed that malice is a pain in the soul, and that laughter is a pleasure, and both occur simultaneously on the occasions in question.
> Protarchus. True.
> Socrates. Hence our argument now makes it plain that in laments and tragedies and comedies--and not only in those of the stage but in the whole tragi-comedy of life--as well as on countless other occasions, pains are mixed with pleasures. (Plato, Philebus, 50A-50B)

Such a belief is closely related to the superiority theory of humour, but Plato also notes the mixture of feelings that emerge in life's tragi-comedy. Laurent Joubert emphasizes this idea in his Treatise on Laughter by observing that laughter "does not come of pure joy, but has some little of sadness." (Joubert, 1579, p. 20) This oscillation of joy and sadness results in laughter.

Descartes's view of humour also involves a mixture of conflict. Descartes concludes that

> the titillation of the sense is so nearly followed by joy, and pain by sadness, that the greater part of mankind does not distinguish the two. And yet they differ so much that pains may sometimes be suffered with joy or pleasurable sensations received which cause displeasure. (Descartes, 1649, II, XCIV, 373)

To Descartes, then, joy and shock equal laughter. Gregory uses Descartes's ideas to conclude that "the act of laughing seems to be a rendez-vous for very various emotions." (Gregory, 1924, p. 201) The same conclusions are made by Greig. (1923, p. 21)

Willmann uses the ambivalent theory of humour a bit differently to explain his perspective. He notes that a situation is most appealing if it involves playfulness and fear or alarm: "With adults the typical funny situation is one providing a playful appeal plus an antagonistic response to reenforce it." (Willmann, 1940, p. 85) Together, these strengthen the response. It is like sitting above a dunk tank; you fear a ball will release the swing into the water, but you also know that you might not be dunked.

Monro brings together the ambivalent theories of humour by concluding that "we laugh whenever, on contemplating an object or a situation, we find opposite emotions struggling within us for mastery." (Monro, 1951, p. 210) At that juncture, humour becomes subjective; it may be viewed as a change of standpoints or attitudes. Ambivalence theories stress emotions and feelings and the conflict mixture that produces laughter as an end product.

Both superiority and ambivalent theories of humour express a comparison or relationship; humour may be seen to be the statement of superiority over an individual or a set of circumstances, or humour may be found in the emotional mixture of pleasure and pain. These perceptions of humour and laughter deal more directly with the stimulus instead of the result and emphasize environmental rather than natural factors in humour.

DIVERGENT APPROACHES TO HUMOUR

INCONGRUITY THEORIES

Keith-Spiegel's definition of incongruity theories is probably the best: "Humour arising from disjointed, ill-suited pairings of ideas or situations or presentations of ideas or situations that are divergent from habitual customs form the bases of incongruity theories." (Keith-Spiegel, 1972, p. 7) While ambivalence stresses emotions and feelings, incongruity emphasizes ideas and perceptions. Things are funny because their presentation is unusual and not because there is a mixture of pain and pleasure. Furthermore, the incongruous elements do not necessarily reflect a superior/inferior relationship.

One of the first writers to describe an incongruity theory was Alexander Gerard, who explains incongruity in his Essay on Taste:

> Its object is in general incongruity, or a surprising and uncommon mixture of relation and contrariety in things. More explicitly; it is gratified by an inconsistence and dissonance of circumstances in the same object; or in objects nearly related in the main; or by a similitude or relation unexpected between things on the whole opposite and unlike. (Gerard, 1759, Part I, Section VI, pp. 62-63)

In the longest eighteenth century essay on laughter, James Beattie distinguishes different kinds of laughter. Laughter caused by tickling is animal laughter; sentimental laughter is aroused by ideas. (Beattie, 1776, p. 303) He concludes that innumerable combinations of incongruous circumstances can provoke laughter. In the following year, Joseph Priestley also argues in favour of incongruity theories of humour. He concludes that humour is principally a matter of contrast--things are funny not because they are the same but because there is something different:

> This effect is the same, whether the objects be brought together in order to be compared or contrasted, because analogy is the foundation of both, and they differ only in this, that when things are compared, the points of resemblance are chiefly attended to; whereas, when they are contrasted, the circumstances

> of difference are principally noted. (Priestley, 1777, p. 213)

The most important theory of incongruity was presented by Immanuel Kant in 1790. Kant's conception of humour studies expectation and its impact on body health and the mind:

> Laughter is an affection arising from a strained expectation being suddenly reduced to nothing. This very reduction, at which certainly understanding cannot rejoice, is still indirectly a source of very lively enjoyment for a moment. Its cause must consequently lie in the influence of the representation upon the body, and the reciprocal effect of this upon the mind. (Kant, 1790, Book II, 332-333)

Humour, then, was seen as an enlivening feature good for body and mind:

> Humour, in a good sense, means the talent for being able to put oneself at will into a certain frame of mind in which everything is estimated on lines that go quite off the beaten track ... and yet on lines that follow certain principles, rational in the case of such a mental temperament. (Kant, 1790, Book II, 335-336)

Kant develops the idea that incongruity is an unfulfilled expectation. Examples of this conception of humour might include the chair that is supposed to be located by the desk (but is not), the door that is supposed to open (but does not), or the tack that is to embed itself into the teacher's backside (but does not). Kant's theory of humour became quite popular by the turn of the nineteenth century. Other theorists like Schopenhauer recapitulate Kant's theory by concluding that laughter is the end product of one's perception of the incongruity between one thing and another --an expectation and the result. (See Schopenhauer, 1819)

Spencer emphasizes that incongruity does not always cause laughter. He defines ascending incongruity as the rise of an insignificant entity to something great, and this results in wonder. Descending incongruity, however, is consciousness transferred from great things to small, and this does result in laughter. (Spencer, 1860, p. 403) Alexander Bain also points out that incongruities are not all funny and, in his judgment, this invalidates the incongruity theory of humour. Bain provides examples such as snow in May, a fly in ointment, or an instrument out of tune which "are all incongrous, but they cause feelings of pain, anger, sadness, /and/ loathing, rather than mirth." (Bain, 1899, p. 257)

The incongruities referred to by different theorists are best represented by Henri Bergson's description of humour's cause: "something mechanical encrusted on the living." (Bergson, 1911, p. 37) Bergson notes that we laugh at a person who is stiff, mechanical, and rigid. He calls it "essential incongruity": "A situation is invariably comic when it belongs simultaneously to two altogether independent series of events and is capable of being interpreted in two entirely different meanings at the same time." (Bergson, 1911, p. 96) These "essential incongruities" must have that feature--simultaneous dual interpretations. Bain's examples of incongruity are singular, and cannot be interpreted as Bergson proposes.

Willmann suggests that it is "the union of two ideas which involve some sort of contradiction or incongruity" that results in humour. (Willmann, 1940, p. 72) This interpretation makes little sense in the midst of discussions of incongruity as contrast. Clearly, humour is not the product of the union of incongruous elements but in their differences. Bateson is one theorist who emphasizes contrast in incongruity which results in confusion and inner disorder and a new affective organization of experience: "I am arguing that there is an important ingredient common to comfortable human relations, humor, and psychotherapeutic change, and that this ingredient is the implicit presence and acceptance of paradoxes." (Bateson, 1969, p. 165) Bateson's conception (which may have been engendered by Koestler, 1964) is expanded and developed by Bailey who notes that "an opposite is the basis of all humor, and convincingness is the thing that makes the opposite work. Without convincingness there is no humor. Together they form the humor structure." (Bailey, 1976, p. 53) This convincingness, then, is what strikes one as correct, but an individual can be easily tricked. Bailey's thesis clarifies incongruity by noting the distinction between the contrast ("essential incongruity") and the convincingness (the expectation) in producing humour:

> The manner of telling, that is, the style--is a part of convincingness. The degree of the reader's familiarity with the subject and its relative importance to his ego are factors in the success of the attack by the opposite. But how much laughter is evoked by a piece of humor depends mainly on the oppositeness of the opposite, and the convincingness of the convincingness. The more of each the better, provided they balance each other. (Bailey, 1976, p. 54)

One other aspect of incongruity, which has not really been mentioned to date, is noted by McGhee. He sees the importance of incongruity in humour as the mental processing that resolves the situation. He posits that humour is intellectual play. (McGhee, 1979, pp. 42-43) Putting these notions together permits an audience to gain a better understanding of incongruity theories of humour. In Paulos's recent writings, the concepts of contrast (or opposites), convincingness (mind play expectations), and mental process come together. Paulos defines humour theory like this:

> What seems fairly uncontroversial or unproblematical is the logic of humour. Most theorists agree, once allowance is made for different phrasings and emphasis, that a necessary ingredient for humour is that two incongruous ways of viewing something (a person, a sentence, a situation, etcetera) be juxtaposed. Different theorists have emphasized different incongruities ... (Paulos, 1977, p. 113)
>
> A joke ... depends on the perception of incon-

> gruity in a given situation or its description. A joke can thus be considered a kind of structured ambiguity, the punch line precipitating the catastrophe of switching interpretations. It adds sufficient information to make it suddenly clear that the second (usually hidden) meaning is the intended one. (Paulos, 1980, p. 85)

The reason that incongruity theories of humour make sense, one supposes, is best expressed by Stephen Leacock who views humour as "the kindly contemplation of the incongruities of life, and the artistic expression thereof." (Leacock, 1938, p. 3) Incongruity is essential in humour theory because it is so much a part of life itself. Leacock concludes that humour, finding its basis in the incongruity of life, can be seen as "the contrast between the fretting cares and the petty sorrows of the day and the long mystery of the tomorrow. Here laughter and tears become one, and humour becomes the contemplation and interpretation of our life." (Leacock, 1935, p. 17)

SURPRISE THEORIES

"Surprise", "shock", or "unexpectedness" are elements which many theorists view as necessary conditions for humour. Some theorists would agree that more than surprise is needed to create humour, but the elements of surprise appear as a part of other theories. Incongruity theory and surprise theory go well together, for example, in that both involve a kind of breaking up of the situation--a divergence.

The physiology of laughter is explained by Descartes who notes (in 1649) that the lungs are inflated with blood in repeated gushes and the resulting laughter is aided by "the surprise of wonder." (Descartes, 1649, II, CXXVI, p. 386) This concept of "surprise" is developed in his assessment of humour:

> When we ourselves jest, it is more fitting to abstain from laughter, in order not to seem to be surprised by the things that are said, nor to wonder at the ingenuity we show in inventing them. And that makes those who hear them all the more surprised. (Descartes, 1649, III, CLXXXI, p. 413)

To Descartes, then, laughter is a mixture of joy and shock.

Thomas Hobbes, as noted earlier, uses the term "sudden glory" and "sudden act" as a cause of laughter; this also suggests an element of surprise or shock. (Hobbes, Leviathan, I, Chapter 6, in Smith /Oxford/ 1909, p. 45) Sully's summary of humour also notes the importance of suddenness and surprise as ingredients in humour. (Sully, 1902, pp. 67-69) Even Willmann's work on humour theory discussed earlier includes an element of shock accompanied by an inducement to play: "Laughter occurs when a total situation causes surprise, shock, or alarm, and at the same time induces an antagonistic attitude of playfulness or indifference." (Willmann, 1940, p. 70) Keith-Spiegel observes that a repeat "surprise" brings a decline in the level of appreciation. This decline of appreciation is apparent in the surprise theories of humour just as it is in other theories. A joke retold or a duplicate surprise reduces one's interest. (Keith-Spiegel, 1972, p. 10)

The surprise theories can be linked with other theories of humour in the development of a larger humour model. Surprise does seem to be an essential part of the humour experience.

Divergence is vital to humour and laughter. Even the emotional-comparative approaches to humour formulate a kind of divergent picture in a superior/inferior relationship or a mixture of pleasure and pain. Incongruity and surprise theories, however, emphasize the contrasts instead of the comparisons.

INTELLECTUAL APPROACHES TO HUMOUR

CONFIGURATIONAL THEORIES

Configurational theorists believe that humour is experienced because discrepant elements suddenly come together. While incongruity theorists believe that it is the disjointedness that is amusing, configurational theorists put more emphasis on the disjointed elements falling into place. One gains insight and is amused by the process, which involves some intellectual manipulation.

The configurational theories are best represented by N.R.F. Maier's work, sometimes referred to as the Gestalt theory of humour. Maier suggests that when information is presented to us, we order it in a certain way and an unexpected configuration is the result:

> The thought-configuration which makes for a humorous experience must (1) be unprepared for; (2) appear suddenly and bring with it a change in the meaning of its elements; (3) be made up of elements which are experienced entirely objectively (no emotional factors can be part of the configuration); (4) contain as its elements the facts appearing in the story, and these facts must be harmonized, explained and unified; and (5) have the characteristics of the ridiculous in that its harmony and logic apply only to its own elements. (Maier, 1932, pp. 73-74)

The assumptions, facts and ideas must harmonize or the intelligent audience is disgusted. The joy in configurational humour is seeing the logic and the pattern of reason, as the discrepant information is processed by the individual. (See Berlyne, 1960, p. 256) It is interesting to note the importance of surprise in dealing with this conception of humour.

PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORIES OF HUMOUR

The man behind the development of psychoanalytic theories of humour, Sigmund Freud, put forward the idea that humour leads to a psychic release of energy and that the resulting pleasure provides for economy in the expenditure of thought, feeling, or inhibition. (Freud, 1928, p. 3) This intellectual mind play is satisfying, and generates laughter and relaxation:

> It has seemed to us that the pleasure of wit originates from an economy of expenditure in inhibition, of the comic from an economy of expenditure in thought, and of humor from an economy of expenditure in feeling. All three modes of activity of our psychic apparatus derive pleasure from economy. All three methods strive to bring back from the psychic activity a pleasure which has really been lost in the development of this activity. For the euphoria which we are thus striving to obtain is nothing but the state of a bygone time, in which we were wont to defray our psychic work with slight expenditure. It is the state of our childhood in which we did not know the comic, were incapable of wit, and did not need humor to make us happy. (Freud, 1905, pp. 235-236)

Freud discusses two ways in which humour is able to take place. Either a person can adopt a humorous attitude or an individual can derive enjoyment as a spectator of this humorous attitude:

> ... we may say that the humorous attitude--in whatever it consists--may have reference to the subject's self or to other people; further, we may assume that it is a source of enjoyment to the person who adopts it, and, finally, a similar pleasure is experienced by observers who take no actual part in it. (Freud, 1928, pp. 1-2)

There is something about humour, Freud notes, that is a liberating element. What Freud admires about humour (and what distinguishes it from wit and the comic) is

> the triumph of narcissism, the ego's victorious assertion of its own invulnerability. It refuses to be hurt by the arrows of reality or compelled to suffer. It insists that it is impervious to wounds dealt by the outside world, in fact, that these are merely occasions for affording it pleasure. This last trait is a fundamental characteristic of humour. (Freud, 1928, p. 2)

Thus, Freud concludes his theory by bringing into focus the intellectual manipulations that result in the euphoric feeling:

> ... in bringing about the humorous attitude, the super-ego is really repudiating reality and serving an illusion. But ... we attribute to this less intensive pleasure a high value: we feel it to have a peculiarly liberating and elevating effect. Besides the jest made in humour is not the essential thing; it has only the value of a proof. The principal thing is the intention which humour fulfills, whether it concerns the subject's self or other people. Its meaning is "Look here! This is all that this seemingly dangerous world amounts to. Child's play--the very thing to jest about." (Freud, 1928, p. 5)

Freud's belief is based on the inner actions of the mind, and its mental delight in getting the humour. The incongruity or ambivalence is not a factor in this theory; Freud is concerned about the mental process and the pleasures gained from the successful resolution of the humour experience. This process is what separates intellectual approaches from other approaches to humour. The emphasis is placed on natural process rather than environmental stimulus. Humour results not from contrasts or comparisons but from the intellectual endeavour of revealing to oneself what is funny.

TOWARD A SINGLE APPROACH TO HUMOUR

There are many theories of humour, all which put forward reasonable arguments in favour of a certain approach to humour. Clearly, a single approach to humour is not really possible, although it is possible to combine some of these notions to better understand humour. In combining and generalizing, it is also possible that one might create a new humour theory:

> A general feature of the literature is that few authors are satisfied with the formulations of their predecessors. Where so many eminent minds have failed to agree, it would be presumptuous to suppose that any satisfactory explanation of classification of the causes and nature of humor can be easily achieved. (Flugel, in Lindzey, 1954, p. 709)

Stephen Leacock's explanation of this bugbear in humour theory is that humour itself has undergone considerable refinement and change as a result of man's increased sympathy with pain and suffering of others. Exultation, then, keeps away the reality of destruction and pain:

> ... Humor ... changed from a basis of injury or destruction, to what one may describe as a basis of "incongruity" or "maladjustment." It is in this form that it began to find its place more and more with the rise of literature when the spoken and written word becomes the prevalent method of communication of human beings in place of the pantomine and grunts and "direct" action of primitive beings. And more and more it became possible to derive humorous satisfaction out of the incongruities of speech itself, queer inconsistencies and oddities of speech. (Leacock, 1938, pp. 17-18)

Leacock's central belief is that "both the sense of humor and the expression of it undergo in the course of history an upward and continuous progress." Leacock's statement about humour is important in a technological age. He attaches humour to progressive forces in identifying its potential for application. His statement is also representative of the essence of a humorous experience, and a unifying element in the theories of and approaches to humour: communication of a special feeling, behaviour, mood, or attitude, as well as the situational message.

In this light, humour is communication. Humour communicates more than the situation itself ("getting" the joke); it sets a mood establishes a tone, and expects certain behaviours. Moreover, humour develops an attitude in both parties of the communication process.

As such, communication is an important part of the humour experience. Communication "occurs whenever people assign meaning to each other's behavior". (Bassett and Smythe, 1979, p. 5) Indeed, it is impossible to do otherwise.

Bassett and Smythe make three key statements about communication. They note that communication is unavoidable: "No matter what the individual is doing, he or she is behaving, and you cannot be aware of the behavior and fail to interpret it in some way ... If one is aware of the other's presence, he or she will assign meaning to the person's behavior." Second, the authors state that communication is continuous. Indeed, the verbal or non-verbal transaction may have been completed but the action becomes subject to reflection. Third, communication is a process of mutual influence. Each person affects the actions of the other through feedback and other response cues. (Bassett and Smythe, 1979, pp. 5-9)

Communication is vital to teaching because it is a key to the education process, which can be described as "communication between society and the individual" for the benefit of the student. (Hills, 1979, pp. 100, 117) The authors suggest that teachers are effective participants in the communications process when "they interpret students' behavior in the way students intend, and when they behave so that they convey their intended meaning." (Bassett and Smythe, 1979, pp. 9-11) Communication is enhanced when students gain positive rather than negative feelings about learning. Such a feeling can be obtained from the social environment of the classroom which is very much controlled by the teacher. Humour may be an important part of this social environment--and therefore an important part of communication.

Bassett and Smythe suggest that the teacher must establish trust first. Such trust may involve the acceptance of individual differences and the development of consistency in dealing with students. The establishment of empathy involves comprehending the students' feelings, experiences, and perceptions and the ability to ask questions about student thought and feelings. The third aspect useful in the creation of a positive social environment is the ability to listen. (Bassett and Smythe, 1979, pp. 237-242) This leads to the development of interpersonal attraction, which comes from physical propinquity (closeness) and the teacher's availability and perceived openness. Much of how we are viewed by students is based on our self-presentation:

> Role behavior is one of the principal ingredients of self-presentation. When we detect discrepancies in the role enactment of those around us, we usually devalue those individuals, hence feel less attracted to them. Positive attraction effects results from our perceptions of another's mastery of his and her role. For this reason, teachers are expected to be competent, composed, and compassionate in their dealings with students. (Bassett and Smythe, 1979, p. 202)

Such a situation results in "mutual esteem enhancement" in which teachers and students modify their actions for some social reinforcement referred to as the "narcotic of the classroom." (Bassett and Smythe, 1979, p. 204) The teacher can use humour to achieve better communication in the classroom. This communication may be the result of an enhanced or fortified social environment, or the product of an attitude. In creating the right mood, the teacher may be able to improve the classroom situation for all parties who have a stake in the communications process.

Leadership must be apparent to deliver this kind of education. Cortis includes humour as an important part of his personal factors of leadership (capacity, achievement, responsibility, status, and responsibility /including humour/). (Cortis, 1977) Aspy makes similar remarks when he writes about the assumptions of humanized education. He sees interpersonal facilitation as vital in the schools so that the teacher and student understand, care, and develop an interest in others. Understanding enhances communication in the classroom. (Aspy, 1972, p. 5)

It is important to note, as well, that Flanders' Interaction Analysis Categories have some application to the social environment of the classroom. The humanized, or maybe even humourized, education discussed above relies on a free exchange of ideas and student interest in the goings on in the class. (Flanders, 1970, p. 34) The social environment is probably best aided by the teacher's acceptance of feelings, praise and encouragement, and use of pupil ideas (Categories 1, 2, and 3). As well, pupil initiated talk indicates a freedom (and the propinquity, too) representative of a warm social atmosphere. Flanders' categories are useful in showing the kinds of teacher and student behaviour that helps to create a satisfactory atmosphere.

Humour and communication in any classroom are important factors in the educational process. Although it may not be possible to draw a precise definition or theory, humour has crucial applications in the creation of a successful teaching situation in the social studies. Humour as an attitude--a part of the social environment of the classroom--has considerable implications on knowledge, skills, and values inherent in Alberta's social studies.

Chapter 3 outlines this notion of a humorous attitude by applying the work of Marshall McLuhan to the classroom.

CHAPTER III

THE HUMOROUS ATTITUDE IN SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION: MARSHALL McLUHAN AND THE EXTENSIONS OF MAN

Marshall McLuhan is viewed as one of the most significant writers of our time. (See, e.g., Crosby and Bond, 1968) Whether McLuhan is considered a pop philosopher or an all-knowing guru of communication arts, his work on the extensions of man proposes a different way of understanding media.

An important link exists between McLuhan's extensions of man and humour. Keith-Spiegel notes that "laughter and humor are often extensions of a 'light frame of mind.'" (Keith-Spiegel, 1972, pp. 30-31) In explaining the word, "comic", Eastman downplays such descriptions as "lampoonery", "satire", or "ridicule" and instead emphasizes the presence of an "organized conviviality." (Eastman, 1921, p. 126) The "social environment", so critical in the classroom, can be organized to develop "conviviality" and if this is the case, then humour has an important relationship as an extension of oneself in the classroom environment: "Humour depends, indeed, more than any other quality strived after in art or conversation, upon the existence of a favorable atmosphere." (Eastman, 1921, p. 230) Hence, it must be concluded that a potential link exists between humour and the social environment. McLuhan's ideas can be developed to show the inter-relationships of the extensions of man, the social environment, and the nature of humour.

EXPLAINING THE EXTENSIONS OF MAN

McLuhan suggests that we are about to reach the "final phase of the extensions of man--the technological simulation of consciousness." (McLuhan, 1964, p. 3) His belief is that media and technology have been influential in developing world history to the extent that a great new age is unfolding around us.

McLuhan argues that "the personal and social consequences of any medium--that is, of any extension of ourselves--result from the new scale that is introduced into our affairs by each extension of ourselves, or by any new technology." (McLuhan 1964, p. 7) Technology, then, determines the directions of history. To McLuhan, history can be explained in terms of technological change:

> What we are considering here ... are the psychic and social consequences of the designs or patterns as they amplify or accelerate existing processes. For the 'message' of any medium or technology is the change of scale or pace or pattern that it introduces into human affairs. (McLuhan, 1964, p. 8)

McLuhan concludes that "it is the medium that shapes and controls the form of human association and action." (McLuhan, 1964, p. 9)

What McLuhan states is that there have been four great periods of human history. First, man developed on the basis of totally oral communication ("preliterate tribalism"). Customs, traditions, recollections and ways of life were passed on orally as well as by more formal histories (dances, rituals, etc.) The codification of script (beginning around Homer) can be considered to be a second period of human history, in which language developed to record experiences. With the technological advancement provided by the age of print ("Gutenburg technology"), a new period commenced in which the number of books increased and written communication became paramount in day to day life. Since 1900, a fourth period of human history has begun to take hold. This fourth period is the age of the electronic media, which has totally realigned the communicative order. The electronic age is instantaneous--one does not read accounts of the eruption of Mount St. Helens but instead tunes in the television for pictures of the eruption, maybe even live. In each period of human history, it is the medium that matters.

When McLuhan says that "the medium is the message" he means that the "message" of the medium is its impact on the form of society. The oral stage of human history took man far ahead. With the development of a phonetic language, it was possible to communicate. This capability is representative of the medium, as society changed gradually over the years based on oral communication. The impact of the medium included the ability to repeat stories over a period of time (development of cultural traditions and unity). With the development of a written language, the era of codification signalled a new period of history. The impact of this technology (literacy) extended man's capabilities and created the basis of literature. With the development of the printing press, mass literacy was possible and McLuhan points to the Renaissance and the rise of nation states to demonstrate the importance of this medium in terms of social change. McLuhan sees the fourth period of human history, the age of the electronic media, as an extension of man's central nervous system. This extension of man is a key step forward in the technological simulation of human consciousness, and McLuhan believes that the importance of this electronic age equals or exceeds the significance of the Renaissance. (McLuhan, 1964, p. 90) The content of the medium is not an issue to McLuhan. What one watches on television is not crucial; it is the fact that the medium television, is there to watch. Each medium develops an audience whose love for the medium itself is greater than their concern for its content. People read books--any books--because they enjoy reading. Many individuals will turn on the television not to watch a specific program, but just to watch. From channel to channel, these individuals keep flicking the controls until they find something of interest and if there is nothing of interest they keep flicking! The content of the medium is not crucial. It is the medium itself which imposes a tremendous impact on society by reordering the communicative and technological world around us. Societies have been shaped more by the nature of the media than by media's content.

THE PLACE OF MEDIA

McLuhan classifies media by the way they inform and influence society. He examines hot and cool media in order to explain the varying degrees of social participation involved in interpreting meaning. One could conclude that McLuhan's idea of a hot medium is one sharp in definition with an emphasis on visual and verbal communication. Such a medium is low in audience participation because it is filled with data, and one does not need to do much filling in to draw meaning from the picture. McLuhan's idea of a cool medium is something fuzzy, low in information, and open for the audience to interpret meaning. Hot media include print, photographs, movies, and radio; cool media include telephone, television, speech, cartoons, and the modern painting. In the case of a photograph, the visual image is there totally (that is the orientation of the photograph), and there is no need to complete the picture. Talking to an individual on the telephone, however, permits one to fill in a lot of information. These assorted media, both hot and cold, have tremendous impact on one's day to day life.

McLuhan describes a startling future for society. McLuhan concludes that man is living in an age of implosion, not explosion. Traditionally, man has lived the one way pattern of expansion, but the electronic age has different ramifications:

> The process of upset resulting from a new distribution of skills is accompanied by much culture lag in which people feel compelled to look at new situations as if they were old ones, and come up with ideas of 'population explosion' in an age of implosion. (McLuhan, 1964, p. 24)

But new situations are not old ones, and "in our present electrical age the imploding or contracting energies of our world now clash with the old expansionist and traditional patterns of organization." (McLuhan, 1964, p. 35) With more people on this planet, we are closer together physically and internally, too, because of the increased proximity through electrical involvement in other people's lives. McLuhan points out that the electronic age provides an opportunity for us to view, electrically, what is happening anywhere on the face of the earth. The marvel of today's newscasts is that the headline stories always seem equipped with pictures that permit the individual to see what it is really like in another land, another culture, and another person's life. Mankind is drawn closer together by the electonic age, and in this respect, there are considerable similarities to the "preliterate tribalism" in the first phase of human history. The printed word is losing its significance, and the electronic age is returning mankind to an aural predominance and an interrelatedness. This implosion, McLuhan reasons, permits the creation of a global village, in which all of mankind is brought together technologically; the future is the interdependence of the global village. The electronic age, and its crucial technological innovations, changes society.

McLuhan studies human history in terms of advances in space and time (a different way of looking at technological innovations). McLuhan suggests that "the spoken word was the first technology by which man was able to let go of his environment in order to grasp it in a new way." (McLuhan, 1964, p. 57) Communication reached a new level because more individuals could understand more things more quickly:

> It is the extension of man in speech that enables the intellect to detach itself from the vastly wider reality. Without language ... human intelligence would have remained totally involved in the objects of its attention. Language does for intelligence what the wheel does for the feet and body. It enables them to move from thing to thing with greater ease and speed and ever less involvement. Language extends and amplifies man but it also divides his faculties. His collective consciousness or intuitive awareness is diminished by this technical extension of consciousness that is speech. (McLuhan, 1964, p. 79)

McLuhan concludes that:

> the phonetic alphabet, alone is the technology that has been the means of creating 'civilized man'--the separate individuals equal before a written code of law. Separateness of the individual, continuity of space and time, and uniformity of codes are the prime marks of literate and civilized societies. (McLuhan, 1964, p. 84)

Civilization today is a literary world in transition; the tribal cultures were based on an auditory life. But the electonic age is changing all of this. The electric implosion is making mankind less separate by eliminating distance and increasing technological togetherness. Electronics captures space and time as society continues to extend itself to increase power, speed and control In some ways, man is returning to his preliterate tribalism. In actuality, he is extending the universe around him. His separateness is diminishing, space and time become less of a factor, and technology blooms as man becomes more interdependent in a global village which McLuhan sees as an optimistic future for all mankind. (McLuhan, 1964, pp. 77-105)

Some reviewers are generous in accepting McLuhan's views. Foshay, for example, credits McLuhan with summarizing the entire Western intellectual tradition into one hypothesis that "the basic experience of western man has been shaped mainly by the invention of type." Duffy and Littlejohn are also laudatory in discussing McLuhan's ideas. (Duffy, 1969; Littlejohn, 1978)

However, not all reviewers accept McLuhan's idea of technological determinism. Writing in The Canadian Forum, Paul West states his admiration of McLuhan's work but disagrees with the definition of "medium". West suggests that a medium is really just a form of energy. He is critical, as well, of McLuhan's classification of hot and cool media, and he proposes that the degree of appeal to the sense would be a better classification than the amount of information provided by the medium. (West, 1964, pp. 165-166) Some writers see McLuhan as a pop philosopher, whose work will fade as the fad wanes. (Rosenberg, 1965, pp 129-136) If there is one recurring criticism of McLuhan's work, it is his wholesale dismissal of the role (or any role) for content in communication. Lieberman, for example, sees McLuhan's beliefs as "McLunacy" because "McLuhan is so full of jerry-built theory, dogmatic overgeneralizations, non-sequiturs, disorganized successions of parenthetic observations, and bewildering swift and large leaps among high peaks of misconception, that he makes little contribution ... " toward understanding media. (Lieberman, 1965, p. 647) He notes that McLuhan's ideas are "content" themselves. Further, McLuhan "ignores the power of ideas, of values, of emotions, /or/ of cumulative wisdom ... " (Lieberman, 1965, p. 649) By dismissing the content, McLuhan's theories fall apart.

Kitman's review of McLuhan's work is critical of the form. While heralding the electronic age, McLuhan's presentation is in the form of a book, representative of the literary, civilized world that is changing. Kitman suggests that one should telephone McLuhan because to buy his book is to play into the hands of his enemies and would discredit his thinking: "To show you really understand the working of media, try calling collect." (Kitman, 1967, p. 7) There is no doubt that McLuhan's beliefs, whether jargon, junk, judicious, or justifiable, contribute to the historiography of human history.

APPLYING McLUHAN TO THE CLASSROOM

McLuhan's ideas also relate to the classroom and a humorous attitude. McLuhan's beliefs are critical to educational progress, as Foshay emphasizes:

> At the root of our thinking about education is our conception of the nature of knowledge, the nature of knowing, the nature of experience. Here is a man who says that the development of the electronic forms for experience wholly transforms it: that the culture-shift we are a half-century or more into is as fundamental as the shift from medieval to Renaissance experience. (Foshay, 1963, p. 37)

Duffy explains what McLuhan means by a medium: it "appears to be anything which conveys information, defining information broadly as any new sensual or intellectual impression." (Duffy, 1969, p. 39) Clearly, then, a number of media can be drawn from education.

It appears clear, as well, that the humorous attitude (as a part of the social environment of the classroom) can be interpreted as an extension of oneself--a "new sensual or intellectual impression."

Humour is an important part of the hot and cool media: "As for the cool war and the hot bomb scare, the cultural strategy that is desperately needed is humor and play." (McLuhan, 1964, p. 31) War has many angles and much information to fill in, but the nuclear bomb scare is a minimal participatory activity. McLuhan suggests that one good way to counteract these difficulties is by cooling off the hot situations. The use of humour is a cool technique, because it permits the individual to read into the situation to develop a personal attachment. One is able to reflect on the message and fill in the missing information to interpret meaning. One attaches a values perspective to this situation, which has important ramifications in social studies. Creating an opportunity for participation encourages individuals to develop their values system in a logical, consistent way.

This leads one to another key point--values clarification in a free, open environment requires the opportunity of touch:

> Since all media are extensions of our own bodies and senses, and since we habitually translate one sense into another in our own experience, it need not surprise us that our

> extended senses or technologies should repeat the process of translation and assimilation in one form into another. This process may well be inseparable from the character of touch, and from the abrasively interfaced action of surfaces, whether in chemistry or crowds or technologies. The mysterious need of crowds to grow and to reach out, equally characteristic of large accumulations of wealth, can be understood if money and numbers are, indeed, technologies that extend the power of touch and the grasp of the hand. (McLuhan, 1964, pp. 116-117)

Does humour as an attitude possess this character of touch, this ability to reach out? Humour as a medium excludes the content; it is not crucial what the nature of the educational lesson may be. However, the nature of humour is such that one's defences are lowered, attention is raised, and interest is increased in the humour itself. The content may be a substantive part for its educational value, but the extension of ourselves--the humorous attitude--sets the appropriate social environment by cooling down the situation and providing an appealing learning opportunity. The content, coated in the humorous attitude, represents the knowledge or skill generalizations. The extension of oneself--the coating--is a values statement. It is a representation of good humour, akin to good citizenship. In the McLuhan sense, the medium is saying "let's not get too hot with knowledge--let's get cool in understanding and clarifying our values in the world around us." This does not underemphasize the importance of knowledge or skills in the social studies; it only underlines the significance of valuing in a changing world. The humorous attitude is a way of living, a way of giving, and a way of receiving information about the social environment. Good humour maintains a crucial relationship; it helps to develop life skills and social relationships. Nice, neat facts and dates are not the social studies legacy. If one acknowledges social studies to be the school subject directed toward citizenship education and life skills, then the humorous attitude may be key in the success of social studies methodology.

OPPORTUNITIES AND DIRECTIONS

McLuhan expresses a particular interest in the hybrids or meetings of two media. He discusses, for example, the meeting of the wheel and an industrial, lineal form which results in the creation of the airplane. The coming together of media involves some restrictions, but also great freedom:

> The hybrid or the meeting of two media is a moment of truth and revelation from which a new form is born. For the parallel between two media hold us on the frontiers between forms that snap us out of the Narcissus-narcosis. The moment of the meeting of media is a moment of freedom and release from the ordinary trance and numbness imposed by them on our senses. (McLuhan, 1964, p. 55)

In the case of social studies education, hybrids could result from the coming together of the humorous attitude and administrative or curricular restrictions in education or educational planning. A humorous attitude requires some situation on the intersection of some experience in order to exist. Could it be that the openness and reach of humour when teamed with the restrictions and limitations of the social studies curriculum can result in effective pedagogy? The attraction of humour works in conjunction with the restrictions of curriculum.

We, as social studies teachers, must recognize the opportunites of the humorous attitude--an important medium in education; yet, "our conventional response to all media, namely that it is how they are used that counts, is the numb stance of the technological idiot." (McLuhan, 1964, p. 18) It is the medium itself that matters. The existence and presentation of the humorous attitude sets the tone, provides the opportunities, and reaches out. Television, for example, has altered students' perceptions of the world around them by creating "a taste for all experience in depth ... The TV image reverses this literate process of analytic fragmentation of sensory life." (McLuhan, 1964, pp. 322-333) The individual is able to view what is happening around the world and his level of consciousness is raised as a result. He understands and appreciates the situation better by seeing and hearing than by reading. The TV medium is important not for the electronic pictures from all over the globe, but for providing the technological availability of in-depth coverage by instantly connecting scene and spectator. As a medium, TV can significantly alter students' perceptions of citizenship. As a medium, the humorous attitude (combined with the restrictions of curriculum and administration) may alter students' outlook on life, values, and life goals.

To capitalize on the opportunity of the humorous attitude, one must not assume the "numb stance." The world is no longer the repetitive and fragmented place of the mechanical era. (McLuhan, 1964, p. 358) In the electronic age, man has more leisure time; more time to develop the artistic qualities increasingly important in today's world. In this sense, too, one sees the similarity of the preliterate tribalism to the extended universe. The implications of this for the social studies (or for school generally) is that for those students who wish to "let go of their environment in order to grasp it in a new way" there are alternative media available to help the individual translate the world around him. (McLuhan, 1964, p. 57) The hybrid of humorous attitude plus curriculum may be less important than the hybrid of the working world plus the high, hourly wage. In either case, the medium is the message about life goals and one's future directions.

The electronic implosion of a global village projects certain directions for social studies. Rooted in technological determinism, McLuhan foresees a global adaptation of the world through the balancing of the senses and the destruction of the old power bases. The printed present will become the printed past, and there will be a larger role for eye and ear. Society will continue to be shaped by the nature of the media, rather than the content of the media. For the social studies teacher, the humorous attitude creates an audience whose interest in the medium is greater than their interest in the content itself. This results in students interested in being in one's social studies classroom. As well, the message of the medium is its impact on society, and the humorous attitude helps to develop a way of dealing with people, as well as assistance in values clarification, citizenship development, and the determination of life goals. Finally, the humorous attitude sets its limitations and its openings for content communication so that curricular aims can be addressed.

In McLuhan's electronic age, social studies is the most crucial subject, and the humorous attitude by itself or in combination with other media provides a way of facing and coping with a technological world. Humour is a cool medium that establishes a crucial societal openness. It is play, but it is also a way of looking at the world around us. It is a true extension of oneself--a medium of increasing value in fixing and manipulating one's social environment.

CHAPTER IV

THE FUNCTIONS OF HUMOUR IN THE CLASSROOM

At the outset of this presentation, assorted theories of humour were presented and a link was established between humour and communication. Humour showed considerable usefulness to education. In examining humour as a form of communication, an argument was constructed that humour serves as a medium—an extension of ourselves. (See Chapter 3) The development of the humorous attitude was presented as an important aspect of social studies instruction; one which improves social relationships and provides an opportunity for educational communication. The purpose of this chapter is to outline and examine the functions humour can serve in the classroom.

A BASIS FOR HUMOUR IN THE CLASSROOM

Bradford observes that

> Of all the things which increase the pleasure taken from study and instruction humor must be among the first. Humor that was good and fit and warmly human, that turned on lights, that was the one touch of nature making all truth kin--such humor was a vivid quality of the teaching we all remember best as the best teaching we ever had. A rare and wonderful grace that exhibited the comicality in persons, places and things was this humor as we remember it. We remember it, too, for the way it seemed to shorten the distance between ourselves and others, and how although it reduced the space we occupied together, it somehow did not make us more crowded. We remember well that it made the classroom

> climate, summer or winter, ideal. (Bradford, 1964, p. 67)

As Aspy notes, " ... we must seek to bring the feeling part of man more on a par with the thinking part of man ... " (Aspy, 1972, pp. 1-2) In a technologically advancing world, it is important to be warm and responsive in the classroom by accepting people for what they are and understanding needs are doing something for them. (Kong, 1970, pp. 28-29) Hurt, Scott and McCroskey describe this extension of ourselves:

> The ways in which you communicate with students not only helps them to develop specific concepts about classroom content, it also helps to shape their attitudes, beliefs, and values about the 'real world' and the people in it ... You provide them with a model of how to get along with a wide variety of people. And, perhaps most important of all, you help to shape their values about learning and intellectual development. (Hurt, Scott, and McCroskey, 1978, p. 205)

Values are made apparent by the teacher's model of communication. A humorous attitude deploys a special variety of the communications process which cultivates a feeling of hope and promise in shaping one's participation in an interactive social environment. It signals a freedom from constraint; an interest in communication.

The importance of communicating in a classroom cannot be overstated. Students may communicate to gain information, to seek influence, to acquire assistance in the making of decisions, to achieve certainty, or to get along with others. Students fail to communicate because they may wish to be left alone, they may wish to conceal information, or they may be alienated or apprehensive. The classroom atmosphere may also deter communication; however, humour can play an important role in establishing a positive social environment. (Hurt, Scott and McCroskey, 1978, pp. 138-145) Bradford's conclusion is particularly useful in relating the function of humour in the classroom:

> Humor's place in teaching is a high place because it is always on the side of civilization against darkness, on the side of life against death. It not only brightens, it cleanses the common life. It not only helps the oppressed, it shames the oppressor. However mordant it may be, however it may sometimes prick our conscience or disturb us in our ease, it is always on the side of hope, high hope. It is always on the side of promise. It asserts that the sun still shines, however dismal the weather of the moment, that the morning stars still sing, and that, what is more, there is something to sing about. (Bradford, 1964, p. 70)

Humour is a factor of attention and "few things hold attention as well as humor judiciously used. Quips and stories provide relaxation from the tensions created by some of the other factors of attention and prepare listeners to consider the more serious ideas that may follow." (Monroe and Ehninger, 1969, p. 232) Other authors refer to humour as "a special kind of change and suspense" or a "matter of style" that may have "direct motivational effects." (Oliver, Zelko, and

Holtzman, 1968, p. 165; Andersen, 1971, p. 185) Andersen notes, as well, that the use of humour "connotes warmth, friendship, acceptance, /and/ communality" and "may well affect the communicator's image." (Andersen, 1971, p. 185) This communication becomes important in gaining attention and influence. Wilson and Arnold report that a number of factors assist in gaining attention, including activity, proximity, realism, familiarity, conflict, vitality, specificity, intensity, and humour. (Wilson and Arnold, 1966, p. 291) The interest gained may also be useful in energizing skills and values attainment by creating positive learning conditions for the student. This energizing is the basis for the use of humour in social studies.

TYPES OF HUMOUR APPLIED TO THE CLASSROOM

Leacock believes that humour is an important energizer, and he describes four types of humour: (1) humour of words, (2) humour of ideas, (3) humour of situation, and (4) humour of character. He also traces the degree of complexity of humour development.

Humour of words is the first form of humour, which includes the use of repetition, rhythm, alliteration, and puns. Repetition, Leacock argues, is probably the oldest form of amusement in such examples as the 'big, big man' or 'bumpety-bump.' Adding sound to sense, rhythm provides an interesting form of harmony. Alliteration, especially in newspaper headlines, is a 'funny' incongruity. Puns, however, are of special interest to Leacock. Some puns involve some ingenuity (on which the humour is based), e.g., 'told' and 'tolled.' The best puns, however, become "a subtle way of saying something with much greater point than plain matter-of-fact statement. Indeed, it often enables one to say with delicacy things which would never do if said outright." (Leacock, 1938, pp. 22-32)

The verbal and visual impact of wordplay has an important place in the classroom. Some of the most frequent applications of humour occur when the wrong word is used in the right way or a word appears to be amazingly right contrary to expectations. (A student recently told me that the Prime Minister of Canada is "Mr. Turdo", and many students agreed.) Metaphors and verbal absurdities are also used with skill. (Leacock, 1938, pp. 33-44) The sound of words can also be important, especially tonal sound in conjunction with use or meaning. Such tonal words as 'goof' or 'slob' convey an image because of their sound. Proper names can be funny, too. Dickens's 'Gradgrind' or Wodehouse's 'Jeeves' are examples of wordplay based on the 'undersound' of the word. (Leacock, 1938, pp. 45-46) They promote images very parallel to actual characterizations. Since words are used so much in the classroom, there is ample opportunity for the injection of humour. Exclamations, descriptions or certain quotations provide good opportunities, especially if colourful words are injected. (My grade ten social studies teacher said things like "Great Greasy Caesar!" and the whole class giggled --but also became very attentive in the class activities.)

Humour of ideas involves the coming together of incongruities. This type of humour includes the parody and the imitation. The parody is used as "a corrective to over-sentiment ... as a relief from pain ... as a consolation against the shortcomings of life itself." (Leacock, 1938, p. 60) It is the highest form of incongruity of ideas, especially as a parody of criticism. The teacher can use parodies and imitations to assist in the classroom. The simulation game and role playing methodologies are, in part, extensions of this kind of humour. A part of the success of these methods is the increased attractiveness of the learning activity as a fun imitation of a real situation. In this sense, humour plays an important function.

A key type of humour is situational. This kind of humour involves a set of incongruous circumstances--a sort of trick playing. Traced back to primitive times, situational humour involves a combination of discomfort and action. Leacock describes humour of situation in this marvelous example:

> The ball game in Jones's cow pasture last Saturday afternoon ended in violent altercation when William Van Nostrand, a visitor from the city, took a long body slide into what he had understood to be third base. (Leacock, 1938, p. 94)

The classroom environment provides an opportunity for situational humour. Such humour may centre upon the teacher or the student, but the opportunity certainly exists. Because the situation involves a cross of discomfort and action, this hybrid may exist in many different circumstances. Situational humour may be rooted in the teacher's or student's actions or discomforts, or in the ordinary or unusual circumstances of the classroom. The student who arrives late to class with an unordinary excuse; the Canada wall map that will not retract; the chalk brush that falls from the ledge to the teacher's shoe; the projection screen that will not stay down; the overhead projector that blows up; the student who brings the wrong notebook; the upside-down slide show; the globe that does not rotate; the desk that breaks--around these incidents or circumstances it is possible to develop a humorous mood. By extending oneself, the teacher is more approachable and more "human." Humour is a gift from teacher to student that serves to persuade the student that the situation around him is good. (Humour may also be a gift from student to teacher that persuades the teacher that the situation around him is good.) Situational humour serves an important educational function: one of developing a social environment conducive to humanized or humourized education. The teacher capitalizes on this environment by touching the student with humour. The student and teacher share together the essence of humanity.

Humour of character is defined as "individuals in whom some particular quality or eminence is developed beyond those of this fellow men." (Leacock, 1938, p. 99) This eminence may be expressed in the differences and oddities of character, which primarily develop one's personal qualities. (Think about the geographer who has trouble reading a map or the historian who cannot remember dates.) A technological world has taken away the individuality of the workplace and, as a result, "the uniformity of life interposes a medium of similarity ... " (Leacock, 1938, p. 104) The individual promotes humour primarily by reputation. The individual, when combined with the situation, generates an element of the social environment. The tone and tune of one's contribution in a given situation plays a significant role in setting a humorous attitude. (Leacock, 1938, pp. 109-112)

In each of these typologies described by Leacock, ways of dealing with the content of humour serve as the central focus, Words, ideas, situations, and characters do not serve as the message of humour, though. These descriptions form a useful explanation of humour content, but are less useful in explaining the social environment or humorous attitude. The existence of a humorous attitude permits the extension of man from the values perspective, rather than from the knowledge generated and skills learned. As Leacock notes, "the humour becomes the method, not the matter." (Leacock, 1938, p. 207) It is the method that carries a values attachment. This reinforces the argument expressing humour as a medium. The teacher becomes a model of a humanized citizenship.

FUNCTIONS OF HUMOUR IN EDUCATION

The only work dedicated exclusively to humour and education is M. Dale Baughman's Baughman's Handbook of Humor in Education. Baughman suggests that communication is most enhanced when the teacher is scholarly and funny. (Baughman, 1974, p. 52) Baughman believes that humour functions in a variety of ways in the classroom.

One of the most important reasons for humour is as a social lubricant. Baughman notes that with proximity, there is an even greater need to get along with our neighbours. As well, technology is providing mankind with a greater number of leisure hours, and social relationships are important in such a case.

Baughman concludes that with humour, "there is greater hope that the moving parts of our social mix will be lubricated." (Baughman, 1974, p. 55) McGhee explains that "it is difficult to imagine a substitute device that would be equally successful at promoting smooth and comfortable social interaction." (McGhee, 1979, pp. 245-246)

Humour is also a safety valve in the classroom. It is possible to ease one's aggressive impulses through humour, and this can be useful in the classroom. Humour can serve as therapy. It can take one's mind off the situation at hand by casting a different interpretation of life. There should be no apprehension about assuming some levity. (Baughman, 1974, p. 56)

Humour can also be used as a tonic "which invigorates and stimulates the recipient. Properly applied, humor does that. It also restores and refreshes." (Baughman, 1974, p. 57) It serves as a kind of mental Lysol because the teacher has control of the classroom situation. In receiving such humour, one recognizes the awareness and empathy associated with educational transactions. In this case, the sense of humour may receive or give the stimulus.

Humour can be used as motivation and cognitive challenge in the classroom, and such an application can be liberating, constructive, and enabling. Humour, because of its motivational tendencies, can push an individual to achieve new goals. As McGhee notes, "the addition of an emotional investment in the content of the humorous event and a social context give humor the zest of which it is capable." (McGhee, 1979, pp. 245-246) The classroom can be cooled down with humour through its use as a survival kit. In such a way, humour is a defence against one's daily trials and tribulations--to help tide one over to tomorrow. (Baughman, 1974, p. 58. There is a striking (and unacknowledged) similarity between Baughman's functions of humour and Steve Allen's functions of comedy described in Allen, 1972, pp. 83-85.)

Raymond Moody, a philosopher-physician, is interested in the medical healing power of humour, and this is directly related to the use of humour as a survival kit. His concept of "healing" means "making whole" and he expresses a hope that

> we are developing ... a broader concept ... in which we pay attention not only to the mind, but also to the functioning of the person within his social context, and ultimately, within the natural environment as well. (Moody, 1978, p. 108)

Indeed, in studying the role of humour as viewed by eighty comedians, Fisher and Fisher conclude that the most important application of humour is to soothe and heal people. (Fisher and Fisher, 1981, p. 216) Maybe its simplest therapeutic application is that humour withdraws attention from pain and helps secure cooperation and understanding in initiating communication. (Moody, 1978, p. 112) All of these explanations connect the humorous attitude with a blueprint for situational survival. Humour's contribution can be weighed as an important quality of citizenship in an electronic age.

INITIATING HUMOUR

Five reasons for initiating humour are outlined by Kane, Suls and Tedeschi. One of the key indicators of social influence is probing, in which initiatives may be taken ambiguously without real risk. There is an apparent move toward intimacy without accountability for one's actions because of the presence of humour. Humour may also be initiated as an act of decommitment to resolve a potentially disasterous social interaction ("I was only joking ... "). Face-saving is initiated in an attempt to trivialize a faux pas, and the incident is funnier if the comedic victim is a respected individual. Humour may also be used for its unmasking qualities through the use of caricature, cartoons, etc., to show incongruity or the ludicrous. As well, humour is an invitation to interact on a personal level. As individuals, we want to be liked, and humour conveys a basic honesty that encourages social sensitivity. (Kane, Suls and Tedeschi, 1977, pp. 13-16)

Braden suggests other reasons for initiating humour. Humour provides for emphasis or amplification of a specific point. It is an important tension-reducing devise or it may serve as a kind of thought break. Humour is also an expression of good will toward listeners and assists in coping with the unexpected. (Braden, 1966, pp. 161-162) Baughman suggests the use of humour as an opener, a way of gaining and retaining attention, and as an excellent way of redirecting energy. (Baughman, 1974, pp. 84-89) Humour can be utilized throughout the classroom setting in a variety of applications.

HUMOUR, PERSUASION AND ATTRACTION

Research conducted into the use of humour as a form of persuasion is particularly interesting. Gruner reviews research on humour's power of persuasion and concludes that

> humor fails to increase persuasiveness of argumentative messages. Sprinkling jokes, wisecracks, puns, sarcasm, or even satire through a speech seems to add nothing to that speech. Adding humor which is germane to the particular message seems to heighten its entertainment (amusement) value, but that is all. On the other hand, no study thus far has found that the addition of humor to a message will detract from that message's persuasiveness. This conclusion seems to be limited to three conditions, however. The original message must be an effective, persuasive message with or without the humor. And the humor added to the message must be appropriate to the audience and germane to the message portion into which it is inserted. And the humor used must apparently be of a kind and nature that will not cause the source of the message (the

> writer or speaker) to be perceived by his audience as "clownish." (Gruner, 1978, p. 203)

Gruner believes that

> a speaker who can and will follow the prescriptions of speech content, organization, and delivery which are advocated by almost any speech textbook will produce some measurable persuasion ... Common sense would indicate that if one speaker or writer is known to be entertaining as well as persuasive, he would draw the audience whereas the persuasive but nonentertaining speaker or writer would not. (Gruner, 1978, p. 204)

Although the persuasive influences of humour are being scrutinized, Gruner is encouraged by the increased use of humour in advertising. He concludes that "advertising men have found humor to be successful in moving the merchandise." (Gruner, 1978, p. 205) Through humour, an audience is attracted which is "either unwilling or only slightly motivated to watch and listen." (Zillmann, 1977, p. 293) Humour's use in gaining and retaining attention is particularly important. (Gruner, 1978, pp. 208-209) Gruner has found, however, that the addition of humour results in higher ratings for the speaker's character. The individual who entertains and informs is better admired than the individual who just informs. Humour added to a dull speech increases the speaker's authoritativeness. The speaker's image is enhanced as a result, but learning may not necessarily be increased. (Gruner, 1978, pp. 227-228) The speaker may use humour to reduce his own nervousness and increase the opportunity for audience participation. Gruner bemoans the fact that there is little research completed on humour as a form of communication, but he does make these conclusions:

> About the use of humor in informative discourse, we can probably conclude that its inclusion does not aid in learning factual material; that it adds interest to dull messages but not to already interesting ones; that the addition of humor to informative messages may, under some conditions, enhance the "image" of the message's source. (Gruner, 1978, p. 242)

Earlier work by Gruner places some conditions on this issue. Negative reviews for humour are predicated on studies requiring universal attendance--a captive audience. Consequently, "it is probable that humour operates differently in securing and holding attention in the real world." (Gruner, 1976, p. 303) In his recent, conclusions, Gruner pinpoints newer but uncited research that suggests that long-term retention levels are increased by humorous over non-humorous presentations. (Gruner, 1978, p. 245) Common sense suggests this may be the case. When I meet former students who talk about their bygone school days, their memories centre on some of the humorous incidents that occurred in the classroom and the assorted learnings that revolved around the humour. If this is indeed the case, then humour's role may have increased significance.

Not all commentators express positive feelings about the function of humour in the classroom. Zillmann, for example, has major concerns about humour because it may generate high expectations in students to be entertained in the learning process:

> Children may 'get hooked' to these gratifications, attending to educational messages only if they are spiced with humour. The last bit of motivation to learn without laughs may thus be undermined. This seems a fundamental problem in education. (Zillmann, in Chapman and Foot, 1977, p. 295)

Zillmann believes that the link between education and humour is not very strong. Other commentators suggest that the use of humour is very important in the classroom environment:

> ... Of the many ... uses of humour, the classroom is one of the places where it might be most helpful. Take the enormous success of the children's television programme 'Sesame Street'. Children have been taught to read, and to count, and to use concepts, in the context of funny and ridiculous situations. Learning can be fun ... (Levine, 1977, p. 136)

DEVELOPING THE HUMOROUS ATTITUDE

Not all teachers make use of humour in their teaching. Moody believes that teachers, because of the nature of the educational process, are more responsive to negative emotions like aggression, anger, greed, depression, anxiety, and hostility instead of positive emotions like love, elation, altruism, sympathy, generosity, or understanding. (Moody, 1978, xiv) Moody's perception of the teacher's life in the classroom seems to weigh such elements as discipline, over-filled classes, curriculum change, and truancy instead of dedication, interest, and personal commitment. Stanford and Roark argue that empathy, positive regard, congruence, and concreteness of expression are the basis of the best social relationships. (Stanford and Roark, 1974, pp. 40-41) The qualities outlined are well represented by the humorous attitude. When the teacher adopts the humorous attitude, he adopts "a state of mind. In that state, man re-asserts his invulnerability and refuses to submit to threat or fear." (Levine, 1977, p. 127)

Teachers must learn to laugh at themselves: "The folly of taking one's self too seriously is nowhere more evident than in education. When we laugh at ourselves, we have a healthy perspective and are able to neutralize our shortcomings." (Baughman, 1974, p. 70) By assuming the humorous attitude, the teacher opens himself to the world and extends himself to others. He communicates with a smile and with a positive regard for others. He develops a positive social environment into a positive learning environment. He creates an opportunity for the establishment of an operative working relationship with others. As well, he helps the student develop a broader perspective on life and derives therapeutic benefits from the experience: "humor itself is one of the good things of life ... /and/ to dispense laughter to someone would be to increase the quality of his life." (Moody, 1978, p. 120)

If one can accept this argument, then humour is an important pass key into a social environment in which the locks are always changing. The humorous attitude puts emphasis on positive social relationships and develops a feeling of openness and attachment. It develops interest and gains the attention of an audience and may even have importance as a form of persuasion. But most central to the classroom, the function of humour is to extend the attitude of the teacher and to provoke a positive outlook on a changing, technological world. The distance between one another is reduced, the universal medium is deployed, and an optimistic vision encompasses the inter-relationships of the electronic global village. As a teaching medium humour in social studies education tempers knowledge attainment and skill development, and promotes positive personal expression. The world becomes a better place to live.

Social studies is especially suited to the medium of humour. The nature of the social studies classroom and its relationship to humour as a teaching medium is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER V

THE IMPORTANCE OF HUMOUR IN SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The central position of this thesis is that humour is a key medium in social studies education. At its most basic level, humour is a part of a teaching philosophy and maybe even a philosophy of life. If we, as teachers, extend ourselves in the classroom we may be better able to meet the pedagogical and personal challenge of the social studies.

Humour permits a more relaxed social environment in which learning is positively addressed. In such a situation, the teacher and students are able to gain pleasure from the joys of others and to participate in a slice of life that is unselfish, interactive, and essentially liberating. Such an environment has particular impact on the student's development of values, beliefs, and attitudes, and can make the attainment of knowledge and skills objectives a less difficult task. The student develops an outlook on life which is consistent with his personal nature and his values. Humour as a teaching medium may encourage the growth of interactive citizens who carry forward a positive and constructive world view of man and essential humanity in a technological (and sometimes impersonal) world.

HUMOUR AND TEMPERAMENT

A traditional meaning of humour involves the notion of "disposition" or "temperament" and applies to the nature of the human condition. Once a medical description of one's general health (it was the physician's task to keep a man in good humour), humour is accepted today as meaning odd, exceptional, or incongruous in a pleasing or amusing way. (Leacock, 1938, pp. 8-9) A further attempt at definition is silly: "Definition, of course, is as free as disbelief and it would be of no value to pile up citations of authority, since the matter lies outside the ambit of quantitative measurement." (Leacock, 1938, p. 46) In a similar sense, it is not reasonable to expect a single theoretical approach to humour since cognitive, social, motivational, and physiological aspects of humour vary and this discrepancy makes a more general theory exceptionally difficult to develop. (McGhee, 1979, p. 42)

The notion of temperament is of striking significance to humour and education. As Gregory observed, "the ways men laugh and the things they laugh at are excellent indexes of their nature." (Gregory, 1924, p. 202) The nature of the social studies classroom itself can provoke a variety of dispositions. By teaching toward the maintenance of "good humour" it seems apparent that there is identification of the factors which relate to active citizenship, a key division of the Alberta social studies.

THE NATURE OF THE SOCIAL STUDIES CLASSROOM

There are a number of reasons why humour is an important component of social studies education. These reasons centre on the issues approach to social studies, the historical "slice of life", the problem of knowledge generation and the nature of that knowledge, teacher-student status, and the use of humour as a control device.

Issues are organized on the basis of social inquiry in Alberta social studies and students are given the opportunity to make judgments about crucial questions based on their research information. Some of the questions are certainly non-trivial. In grade eleven, for example, students study projections for the future of the world and some students may conclude that there is no hope for mankind. In grade ten, students examine the unity question in Canada and some individuals believe that there are no solutions for our apparent disunity and regionalism. Humour is important in such a social studies class because of the gravity of the questions and the onslaught of depression or helplessness. While the program may emphasize the role an individual may have to improve the human condition, some issues focus more on the collective welfare of mankind, which is not overwhelmed by the influence of one active citizen. Humour breaks the tension and restores a balance. It takes the mind away from the questions, or at least, makes the questions a bit lighter. It may be man's nature to turn to humour as a way of dealing with difficult, tense situations. In this sense, humour is a form of therapy for a troubled, anxious world.

Central to the social studies experience is man and his world. In light of real live personalities, the social studies must animate the figures of the past as well. The historical "slice of life" means that the social studies can use humour to personalize characters in history. By extending oneself in this sense, the teacher is able to convince students to willingly suspend their disbelief that the personalities are no longer living. When animated, the historical figures also become relevant to students.

The traditional view of social stuies is that it is a mass of nice, neat facts and dates and that the teacher's job is to spout off as the topic demands. Although the Alberta social studies program uses a reflective inquiry orientation, a key point needs elaboration. Social studies classrooms are frequently places where factual data abound, and to provide an improved classroom temperament the use of humour becomes an important change of pace. Humour breaks the monotony of the factual expert and puts a bit of zip into classroom experiences.

The classroom situation can also be affected by the customary relationship between teacher and student. The issue of status dictates the differences between the teacher and the student. Status implies differences in approachability and personal regard. The student may view the teacher as highly competent and knowledgeable but not very approachable. This situation could emerge in a social studies classroom fueled by factual learning, in which the teacher is seen as the all-knowing wizard who has mastered absolutely everything that students need to know. An extension of this situation permits the emergence of a master teacher who students see as far superior to themselves: the teacher knows everything. In some classes, the student may view the teacher as incompetent and unapproachable. The teacher's lack of approachability can also affect respect. In any of these circumstances, the relationship between teacher and student is impeded on a personal level. Humour is a useful pragmatic tool to demonstrate how people are really the same in their essential humanity. A formal classroom can mean formal learning, but it may also reduce the opportunities for interpersonal communication which are a key element in the teacher's extension of oneself. The humourized classroom is directed by a teacher who breaks down the barrier separating teacher and student. In such a classroom, it is possible to have more authentic discussions because the social environment encourages the interrelationship of human beings. Such an interrelationship is vital to meaningful citizenship education.

Finally, humour can be used as an important control device in social studies education. Humour is the medium by which the teacher is able to cool down or heat up the classroom. The teacher may use humour to cool down a controversial issue (like population growth and scarcity of resources) or to enhance the relationship with students. In a similar sense, the teacher may heat up the examination of past personalities and humour may be used to enliven knowledge generation. Humour can also be used to begin a social studies class. The teacher uses humour to control the classroom environment by persuading the student that the teacher and student are both human. Humour can be used to focus student attention and to initiate a lesson, especially if the lesson deals with non-trivial issues. The control device helps to create the classroom environment in which a humorous attitude flourishes. A teacher who uses his skill in such a way becomes a superior teacher:

> Regardless of most other variables, the teacher does make the difference. And the teacher with humorpower makes an even greater difference. The teacher with the higher humor quotient may find it easier to communicate with youth. (Baughman, 1974, pp. 82-83)

The social studies teacher who teachers to reach students helps them to recognize their condition and their potential--their "being" and their "becoming"--as individuals setting their goals for the future from a positive perspective.

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND VALUES ATTAINMENT

Humour, as an extension of the teacher, helps achieve the knowledge, skills and values inherent in the Alberta social studies program. Humour frames the content with an appealing coating that is inviting to an audience. Knowledge and skills objectives are attained with the use of humour, which helps create the positive social environment in which the student makes values judgments. The teacher's outlook is positive, and the student adopts such an orientation. This does not mean, however, that the use of humour is the absolute answer to powerful and appropriate social studies instruction. It is worth remembering that even humour cannot make the world better if it is bad to begin with:

> What we need in our time is a mature realism which makes us understand that the human predicament is with us to stay. We shall not

> eliminate sin in others and we shall not eliminate it in ourselves. We shall not achieve utopia in our schools, though we can make some things relatively better than they are. Meanwhile we are wise to learn again to laugh, primarily at ourselves. (Baughman, 1974, p. 75)

The application of humour techniques to the curricular objectives of the social studies results in the creation of McLuhan's hybrid in technology--the result is a new dimension in social studies education. Through this combination, the qualities of good citizenship become central. Given a model temperament and the questions mandated by the curriculum, how does social studies achieve visions of good and bad? Flugel explains that

> insofar as we have learned to laugh at the right things, we shall have freed ourselves from an immense burden of anxiety, confusion, cruelty, and suffering, and shall have taken a significant step towards attaining that godlike clarity of vision that will enable us to distinguish what is truly good from what is truly evil. (Flugel in Lindzey, 1954, p. 732)

It is in such a hybrid that the social studies achieves a degree of success in attaining values, skills, and knowledge objectives.

UNIVERSALITY OF HUMOUR

We all laugh. Humour is a universal experience. Humour is also a democratic experience because people all over the world engaged in humour are equal and united. Humour is the very expression of equality:

> Humour is national and international--national in its form but its content common to all mankind. Springing from the depths of a people's life, and drawing upon the incomparable wealth of experience, humour in its highest classical forms of expression always becomes international property. Universality is of the very essence of humour. (Boryev, 1976, p. 24)

Social studies teachers need to share in this humourized education. Universal in nature and democratic in form, humour is the international link, the cultural bridge, and the ideological buffer all rolled into one. In its most positive extensions, humour as an attitude means a world of peace and understanding.

In the final analysis, humour humanizes education. The struggle between man and machine makes humour even more important in the development of a responsible, actively aware individual in a changing world. The influence of humanizing is widespread, indeed. This conception of citizenship education profiles the future from a positive perspective. As shapers of a future world, the students of social studies have a particular challenge which can be focussed by the application of humour. In doing so, the world moves closer together to rediscover the true essence of humanity. A humorous attitude may help to create a global village shaped by a new generation of active, caring citizens guided by a universal world view.

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